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The Editors: The Urinalysis State

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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FOUNDED 1914 — *A Weekly Journal of Opinion* — ISSUE 3,715

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

THE FATTEST TARGET

The era of Gramm-Rudman is not going to continue much longer before attention starts to focus on the federal government's second-biggest welfare program. Social Security costs about $200 billion a year. Estimates of the direct cost of our part in defending Europe—troops and weapons stationed there, plus troops whose sole mission is to reinforce them—begin at a conservative $100 billion (a third of the defense budget). The cost of defending Japan is fuzzier to calculate, but it would be hard to figure less than $150 billion for Europe and Japan together. And guess what? That's just about the size of the deficit.

The numbers that call this expense into question are familiar. We spend about 6.5 percent of our gross national product on defense, the NATO allies spend an average of 3.5 percent, and Japan spends one percent. The U.S., with less than half the total GNP of NATO plus Japan, forks out for almost two-thirds of the total defense bill. Even under a Defense Department calculation figuring, on the principle of the progressive income tax, that richer countries should pay a larger proportional share, we're carrying 20 percent more than our fair share and Japan is carrying one fourth of its own.

Yes, yes, there are rebuttal points in this "fair share" debate. Most European nations spend more on foreign aid than we do. They also have conscription, which we don't, and their manpower costs are lower, skewing the results a bit. Figuring in reserves, the Europeans have a larger fraction of their population ready for battle than we do—though figuring in active-duty soldiers only, we bear this burden disproportionately, too. (And none of these caveats applies to Japan.) Of course, people say, we're the superpower, after all. True enough. But they, not we, are the ones at the most immediate peril.

Oddly, the Defense Department sees the allies' larger peril as a valid excuse for their spending less on defense, rather than a logical reason for spending more. In his most recent report on the burden-sharing question, Secretary Caspar Weinberger tolerantly notes that "there are understandable differences among the allies" about defense spending, "not only by virtue of history and culture, but also because of geography. . . . the Europeans' sense of the risks of conflict is more immediate than our own, and the public desire for an easing of East-West tensions is more widespread." Needless to say, Weinberger doesn't display this remarkable understanding when the lily-livered desire for an easing of East-West tensions surfaces among citizens of his own country.

Weinberger knows the burden-sharing issue is a trap. He doesn't want allied sloth to be an excuse for America to spend less on defense. But of course he also doesn't want to leave the impression that anyone is yet spending enough. The allies, he writes, "are making a substantial contribution to the common defense—greater than is commonly recognized." On the other hand, there's no disagreement "that our allies should indeed do more."

Whenever the matter of this patent imbalance is raised, Washington professionals go all worldly, invoking history, performing national psychoanalysis, and cautioning against naïveté. Current arrangements are protected by a dense network of foundations, seminars, studies, and conferences on "the future of the alliance," most often funded by the Germans and the Japanese. Together, these boondoggles assure that anyone even tangentially involved in the debate gets at least one trip abroad every year to mingle with fellow chin-waggers and reject oversimplifications.

Of course the future of the alliance needn't be in danger. The subject here is cash. The allies can shoulder more of the defense burden directly, or they can find ways to reimburse us for some of our expenses. Either way the underlying mutual commitment can be preserved. The first solution might make more sense in the case of Europe, the

continued on page 41

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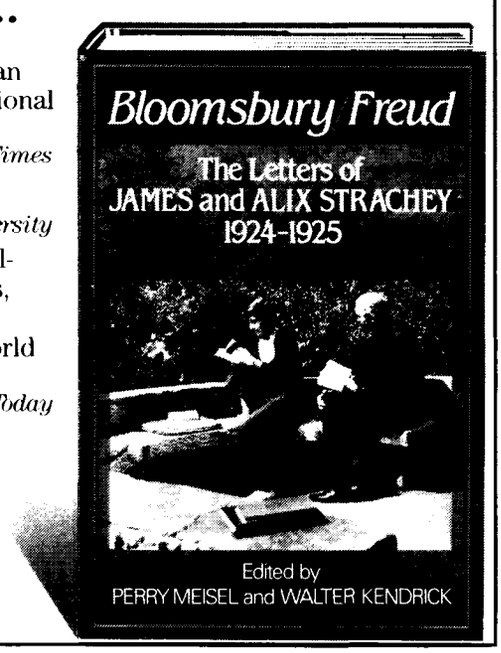

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CORRESPONDENCE

NOT COOL TO CEREZO

To the editors:

There are diehards on the left who genuinely believe that the U.S. favors military dictatorships over civilian, democratic rule in Latin America, and every once in a while TNR seems to join them ("Truths for El Norte," February 10). The editors state as a fact that "the Reagan administration's coolness toward [Guatemalan president Vinicio] Cerezo is already apparent." What evidence is cited for this assertion? The editorial notes that Ecuador's president was in Washington at the same time Cerezo was being inaugurated as Guatemala's new president, so that Vice President Bush went to the inaugural, where he spent only "all of ten minutes" alone with President Cerezo.

What nonsense! President Reagan, like all his predecessors, never attends inaugurations; the best signal of our desire to honor such an event is to send the vice president rather than a Cabinet member, senator, or other official of lower rank. Thus it is that the vice president represented the U.S. at the inaugurations in Brazil, Argentina, and Honduras. As to the ten minutes, TNR was perhaps unaware that Mr. Cerezo was officially invited to Washington before his inauguration, for lengthy meetings with the vice president, Treasury Secretary Baker, National Security Adviser Poindexter, and other officials. Is that yet another sign of "coolness"?

Is it a sign of "coolness" that, in a Gramm-Rudman year, when economic support funds to other countries in the region are being cut, we have decided to quadruple those for Guatemala?

The administration needs no lessons from TNR about Mr. Cerezo or the importance of democracy in Guatemala.

ELLIOTT ABRAMS
Assistant Secretary of State
for inter-American Affairs
Washington, D.C.

SOFT ON STALIN?

To the editors:

Gertrude Himmelfarb's exercise in Marx-bashing, "The Group: Bourgeois Britain and Its Marxist Historians" (February 10), might give comfort to Margaret Thatcher, who reportedly complains that most of Britain's history is now written by Marxists. But to my mind, Himmelfarb's account stinks of reckless mendacity.

Himmelfarb leaves readers with the impression that the British Marxists have been soft on Stalinism. Her account is triply misleading. First, in the case of Edward P. Thompson, he is perhaps doing more to fight Stalinism than any political activist in the contemporary West, and has been saluted for such by dissidents in Czechoslovakia's Charter 77, Hungary's Dialogue group, the Soviet Union's Moscow Trust Group, and East Germany's Swords into Ploughshares. Doubtless, in Himmelfarb's vision, the protests against Stalinism by these left dissidents cannot be taken seriously, for they have been delivered "in a polemical context." Second, though she may have grounds to attack their lack of sustained, historical materialist study of Stalinism, the British Marxists of the 1956 generation did open a wide-ranging dialogue with the ideas of the leading anti-Stalinist dissidents and émigrés, including Deutscher, Djilas, and the young Kolakowski. Third, despite Thompson's slugfest with Perry Anderson, the 1968 generation of British Marxists continued to engage with the ideas of Deutscher and subsequent dissidents such as Bahro and Medvedev, while producing important critiques of Stalinism in their own right.

JACK TRUMPBOUR
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Gertrude Himmelfarb replies:

Mr. Trumpbour is obviously incapable of understanding the distinction I made between polemics and scholarship. I said that Thompson, although "more vigorous than the others in denouncing Stalinism," has done so only in a "polemical context" and that he has not inquired seriously into the "relationship between Stalinism and Leninism, or Leninism and Marxism." Mr. Trumpbour's reply that Thompson is a "political activist" who has been "saluted" by dissidents in Communist countries is irrelevant to my point. Nor do the Trotskyists and dissident Marxists he cites represent anything like the "wide-ranging dialogue" he ascribes to them.

Mr. Trumpbour makes no effort to refute my charge that the other British Marxist historians have also conspicuously failed to inquire into the history of Stalinism, communism, or the Soviet Union—subjects about which they might be expected to feel some curiosity and even responsibility, considering their prolonged membership in the Communist Party during a period that included the worst years of Stalinist tyranny. It is Hobsbawm himself (who can hardly be accused of "Marx-bashing") who first pointed out that the members of the Group avoided writing about recent history "for obvious reasons." If they continue to avoid this subject, as they do, it is perhaps for the obvious reason that they continue to be Marxists—unlike, as Hobsbawm has also pointed out, the French historians (Le Roy Ladurie and Furet are notable examples) who ceased being Marxists when they left the Communist Party. And unlike, one might add, Kolakowski, who has been bitterly castigated by Thompson, and who has written extensively and most thoughtfully about Marxism, Leninism, and Stalinism.

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB
New York, New York

BY WHOSE BOOK?

To the editors:

I am writing as the English translator of *Fire from the Mountain* by Omar Cabezas, recently discussed in your pages by Xavier Arguello ("A Guerrilla and His Pen," February 24). It is not my translation that is quoted in the article, and this is nowhere made clear. Furthermore, the version provided by Mr. Arguello in one instance, I believe, seriously distorts the original.

My translation of one section about the Sandinista Front reads: "We had posters plastered all over the streets, on the walls; we robbed banks, which all the radio stations reported while the whole country hung on the *beep-beep-beep-beep-beep* of those famous flashes. With news like that going out to the whole country we saw ourselves as much bigger than we really were through the magnifying glass of publicity. . . ."

Here is the Arguello version: ". . . there were . . . kidnappings and bank robberies which caused the entire country to remain glued to the radio for days at a time awaiting the latest flash; the deployment of propaganda disguised as information; all of this led us to see ourselves as we were reflected in the fun-house mirror of publicity. . . ."

What troubles me most is Arguello's use of the phrase "propaganda disguised

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
MARCH 31, 1986

THE YELLOW PERIL

The President's Commission on Organized Crime spent 32 months and nearly five million dollars preparing its recent report on drug abuse and trafficking. There's something for everyone in the panel's 1,000-page study, but here's the gist of its recommendation: since law-enforcement techniques have failed to curtail the supply of illegal narcotics, we should try to diminish the demand. In pursuit of that goal, the commission argues, the president should direct all federal agencies to implement "suitable drug testing programs." State and local governments and the private sector should follow suit, and federal contracts should be denied to firms that don't test for drugs. In other words, practically everyone should have his or her urine tested. Laboratory owners and manufacturers of small plastic cups should be delighted with the scheme.

Several members of the panel have dissented publicly, saying that the controversial suggestion was added without their knowledge. U.S. Court of Appeals Judge Irving R. Kaufman, who chairs the commission and supports the idea, has refused to answer their objections. But the report has been greeted with signs of approbation as well. Attorney General Edwin Meese III caused some confusion in the press when he stopped short of endorsing the plan (saying it might be too expensive), yet argued that drug testing doesn't violate anyone's constitutional rights. (See Notebook, page 9.) Representative Clay Shaw of Florida embraced the idea unreservedly. He volunteered himself and his staff for urine tests as soon as they can be arranged.

In fact, we are already much closer to universal urine testing than most people realize. One-quarter of all Fortune 500 companies, including IBM and General Motors, now administer urinalysis tests to applicants or current employees. Another 20 percent are planning to institute programs within the next two years. According to a *USA Today* survey cited in the Kaufman commission report, two-thirds of those firms won't hire anyone who fails a test. Of those testing current employees, 25 percent fire those who fail, while 64 percent require treatment, strongly recommend it, or take disciplinary action. Since a urine sample is usually taken as part of a medical examination, applicants and employees often don't know that they are being checked for drug use.

The tests are probably justified for air traffic controllers and Drug Enforcement Administration agents who now undergo them regularly. There's even a case to be made for testing professional athletes, part of whose job is to serve as role models to children. But need the same standards be applied to the entire work force? The *Los Angeles Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, and the *New York Times*, for example, screen all new employees for drug use. Although the *New York Times* doesn't tell applicants that their urine will be tested for narcotics, a spokesman says the company's policy is to not hire anyone whose medical examination indicates use of illegal drugs, including marijuana. Once you are hired, there are no further tests.

And urinalysis is only one of the more intrusive new ways to search people for drugs. Many bus drivers and amusement-park ride operators are required to produce saliva samples, which are tested for the presence of marijuana. According to the *Time* cover story this week, it is now possible to test hair samples for drugs. Some companies have searched lockers and cars, frisked workers on their way into the factory, and set up hidden video cameras. G.M. hired undercover agents to pose as assembly-line workers in order to catch drug dealers. Capital Cities/ABC and the *Kansas City Times and Star* recently called off the

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drug-sniffing dogs after reporters ridiculed their plans for canine searches in the newsroom.

There is already a body of case law on the Fourth Amendment questions raised by the various drug tests. If a warrant is required to search someone's home, you need a probable cause to impound some of his urine. The Kaufman report notes that the Supreme Court recently ruled in favor of the Federal Railroad Administration's right to employ a range of tests for drugs and alcohol. But the commission ignores the fact that the railroad regulations delineate the need for "reasonable suspicion" that employees are under the influence on the job—not that they've used drugs away from work in previous weeks.

BEYOND THE constitutional questions, most would agree that asking people to produce a urine specimen if they want to apply for a job, or to keep the one they've got, is an unwarranted invasion of their privacy. To assure an honest sample, a supervisor must witness its production. The Coast Guard has someone follow each of its 38,000 employees into the bathroom. "We don't want them to bring in baby's urine," one Coast Guard officer told the *Washington Post* in February.

Why are these officers and supervisors, who administer the tests, always assumed to be clean? Programs for widespread testing almost always reflect class bias. Regulations are usually written for equipment operators or assembly-line workers without reference to supervisors or management. Isn't it just as important that they be drug-free? If we test train conductors, shouldn't we also analyze the urine of the railroad bosses? As the Kaufman Commission report indicates, heroin has been climbing up the socioeconomic ladder as cocaine has been descending. Yet lawyers, stock brokers, and senators are rarely included in drug-testing programs, perhaps because they are better able to fight the imposition of such indignities.

Besides running roughshod over personal privacy, the tests are impractical and imprecise. Urinalysis can't tell you whether someone is high on the job—only whether she has traces of narcotics in her system. Cocaine, heroin, and PCP—the drugs employers claim to be most worried about—vanish from the bloodstream in less than 48 hours. If the tests are scheduled, as most are, an employee can avoid detection by staying clean for a couple of days.

But THC, the active chemical in marijuana, remains in the blood months after it is ingested. That's why the vast majority of those who fail drug tests register positive for pot. What do we do with them? Nearly 40 million citizens smoke marijuana at least once a year. Half that number use the drug regularly. Should all of them be fired? If passing a drug test ought to be a condition of all kinds of employment, should a large segment of the population be unemployable? Eleven states have eliminated criminal penalties for possession of marijuana, and Alaskans can grow it legally in their backyards. Rather than weeding 20 million weed-smokers from the work force, employers ought to discipline, treat, or fire those who perform poorly at work, whether or not they use drugs. Axing workers who test positive but demonstrate no other problems doesn't make sense.

Like those who advocate widespread use of polygraph tests, the Kaufman panel puts boundless faith in far-from-perfect scientific techniques. Although the tests have been widely used for only a few years, they've ruined lives and fingered thousands of innocent people. The Pentagon, which administers six million urinalysis tests a year, provides plenty of examples. Urinalysis tests said time and again that a Navy doctor named Dale Mitchell was using morphine. When he failed a polygraph test, he began sending out job applications. Then someone at the Navy lab figured out that Mitchell was testing positive for poppy seed bagels. In 1982 and 1983 a group of 9,100 employees the Army said were using illegal drugs weren't so lucky. They had already gotten their dishonorable discharges when the Pentagon tried to track them down to apologize for convicting them on faulty evidence including mixed-up samples.

Most drug-testing laboratories acknowledge a margin of error of two or three percent. Even by that conservative estimate, four million innocents would lose their jobs if we tested the entire work force. But the conclusions of a secret study of the labs by the National Centers for Disease Control are far less optimistic. According to an article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, the worst laboratories indicated false positive results as much as 66 percent of the time. Only one lab was credited with acceptable performance in testing for cocaine. The CDC study didn't include any marijuana samples, which pose similar, if not more severe, lab problems. Herbal tea and prescription drugs can trigger false positive results, as can being in a room with people smoking marijuana. Those terminated unfairly may waste years and fortunes proving their innocence, if they are able to do so at all.

DESPITE THE abundant hype, the use of legal and illegal drugs has decreased markedly over the past several years. Fewer people are taking heroin, PCP, marijuana, alcohol, and tobacco than they were ten years ago. LSD and Quaaludes have all but vanished. Cocaine use has increased slightly, but may well decline when its dangers become better known—which is what happened with heroin and PCP.

The failure of our policy of interdiction has combined with the hysteria to send the law-enforcement establishment on a search for sweeping solutions. Meese recently suggested stepping up efforts to prosecute consumers of illegal drugs. What sort of indiscriminate check will catch the corporate imagination next? Strip searches for weapons? Polygraphs for potential office thieves? Blood tests for AIDS? All hold forth a similar promise of purity in the workplace, which is why they appeal so strongly to those who run businesses and governments. But such forms of social control, which force people to prove their innocence of crimes they haven't even been charged with, are abhorrent. What starts with little plastic cups ends in the urinalysis state.

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NOTEBOOK

□ NO SCOOP: The front-page news that Dr. Kurt Waldheim served in a German army unit that deported Jews to death camps, among other war crimes (during a time at which, according to Waldheim's recently published autobiography, he was in law school), will come as no special surprise to readers of TNR. Waldheim's war record was discussed in the Washington Diarist column of March 7, 1981, and stirred little interest. Waldheim undoubtedly is correct in his charge that this stuff has been dredged up now because he is running for the presidency of Austria. The question to the press is why it wasn't dredged up while he was secretary-general of the United Nations.

□ FAIR-WEATHER FRIEND: At the National Governors Conference in Washington earlier this month, a reporter asked the participants whether Ferdinand Marcos would be welcome to settle in their states. In attendance was Vice President Bush, whose 1981 toast expressing "love" for Marcos's devotion to democratic principles is a landmark in the history of sycophantic excess. Bush, who has a home in southern Maine, said the tropical tyrant would be welcome "in the northern part."

□ YOUR WITNESS, COUNSELOR: In the trial of three Bulgarians accused of conspiring to assassinate Pope John Paul II, the Italian prosecutor recommended that the defendants be acquitted, then immediately recommended that they be convicted. He said the law required him to ask for acquittal based on a lack of proof, but freed the jury—composed of six lay people and two judges—to overrule his recommendation on the grounds that there wasn't a lack of proof, which he urged them to do. It's nice to see that there's a country with a criminal justice system even more convoluted than our own.

□ PENNY WISE: The cost of maintaining a homeless family of four at a shelter in the Bronx is $70,000 a year—not counting the cost of maintaining the shelter itself—according to New York City officials. The cost at the city's other four large shelters is only $60,000 a year. For the homeless who are put up at seedy hotels around Manhattan, the owners charge a mere $1,000 to $3,000 a month per room. The housing allowance for a poor family living in its own apartment is $270 a month.

□ DOPE:

Meese opposes drug-testing for all federal employees

—*Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 5

Meese Supports Drug-Testing for U.S. Employees

—*New York Times*, same day

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

O LUCKY MAN

HOW LUCKY is President Reagan? Not very, according to him. But then you shouldn't expect him to belittle his own role in producing a successful presidency. Asked about the luck factor at a White House press breakfast on March 5, Reagan told reporters that he's "safe to play cards with." He said that he couldn't recall "some of the wise statements that have been made by many people in the past about what luck really is." What he was reaching for was some hoary proverb about how luck is a virtue of the bold and wise. Well, here's one with a different twist that might apply to the president: Good luck beats early rising.

Despite Reagan's protest, the idea of him as extraordinarily lucky is now the conventional wisdom in Washington. Liberal critics like Richard Cohen of the *Washington Post* insist that Reagan has done everything wrong, only to be undeservedly saved by luck. Less tendentiously, Michael Mandelbaum argues in the current issue of *Foreign Affairs* that Reagan is a "lucky president [who] has been in the right place at the right time." Even conservative allies of Reagan agree that luck is a large ingredient in his success. "You have to admit he was awfully lucky in the Philippines," says an official of the Heritage Foundation.

The Philippines isn't the half of it. Since Reagan entered the White House, the Soviets haven't picked up a single new satellite, and they've lost one (Grenada). Central America has heated up, but things could be a lot worse there. As alarming as terrorism is, there hasn't been anything close to a repeat of the 444-day hostage crisis at the American Embassy in Tehran. Meanwhile, the U.S. economy is chugging along. Not only is there no sign of a recession, but now OPEC is disintegrating and oil prices are falling through the floor. Who deserves credit for all this? Reagan, luck, or both? Let's run down the list and see.

The Philippines. "After figuratively putting an arm around the shoulder of Ferdinand Marcos," Cohen writes, "dispatching his vice president to slobber a toast to nonexistent Filipino democracy, suggesting the opposition and the government were equally to blame for fraud and violence and then—tick, tick, how the clock doth tick—waiting until only he and Marcos shared the same vision of the future, things turned out splendidly." He leaves a few things out. The Reagan policy of cuddling up to Marcos ended abruptly in August 1983, when Benigno Aquino was assassinated at Manila International Airport. From then on, the administration prodded Marcos to restore democracy, terminate economic monopolies, and reform the military. Marcos balked, which prompted Reagan to dispatch a personal emissary, Senator Paul Laxalt, to Malacanang Palace. This resulted in the February 7 elec-

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tion, which, in turn, led to Marcos's ouster in favor of Cory Aquino.

Reagan never threw away his leverage with Marcos. If he had followed Cohen's advice in an earlier column to "pull the plug," and, say, cut off aid to the Philippines, he would have had no way to influence Marcos when he considered using military force against rebellious officers and a crowd of Aquino supporters. Instead, he was able to threaten a cutoff, and Marcos backed off. If Reagan had pulled the plug in 1985, he might never have gotten Marcos to call an election, and Marcos might still be ruling the Philippines. Following the February 7 voting, Reagan resisted State Department pressure to come down hard on Marcos for stealing the election. By keeping alive his link to Marcos, the president was able to facilitate Marcos's departure. For this to happen peacefully, the Reagan policy had to work without a glitch. It did, rare as that might be.

The Soviets. If luck consists of benefiting from things over which you had no control, Reagan has been lucky in dealing with the Soviets. But, as Mandelbaum writes, "the Reagan foreign policy owes its success to good luck, but not to good luck alone." Reagan was confronted fortuitously by ineffective and dying Soviet leaders until 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev took over. But Jimmy Carter, regarded as the unluckiest of presidents, had this advantage too, because Leonid Brezhnev was virtually comatose during most of Carter's tenure. In any case, Reagan has acted more boldly. He called the Soviets' bluff and installed Pershing missiles in Germany. Carter pulled back on deploying neutron bombs there. Reagan has advocated sweeping cuts in nuclear arms and stuck by his proposal. Carter quickly abandoned his proposal for deep cuts in 1977. Mandelbaum says that Reagan has been helped by the limits imposed by the SALT II treaty, which Carter negotiated and he opposed. An arguable point.

Carter's failure to check Soviet imperialism has made Reagan's success all the easier. Carter operated in the isolationist, post-Vietnam climate, which meant he was ill-equipped and disinclined to challenge Soviet moves in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Angola, South Yemen. By 1981 the Soviets had overreached. The outer edge of their empire was exposed, which encouraged the administration to pursue the Reagan Doctrine of trying to roll back Soviet influence or control at its extremities: Nicaragua, Angola, Afghanistan, Cambodia, Grenada. The president is exploiting a situation that Carter didn't face, but the Reagan Doctrine is nonetheless a fresh initiative. So is Star Wars. Both have put the Soviets off-balance. The bottom line: whatever success the administration has had in dealing with the Soviets is part luck, part Reagan.

Central America. Not too much luck here. Reagan backed the right fellow in El Salvador, José Napoleón Duarte, and that has improved the chances for democracy there. He has turned away from Carter's policy of being nice to the Sandinistas, which didn't work, in favor of aiding the anti-Sandinista rebels in Nicaragua, which hasn't worked yet either. But Murphy's Law (if things can get worse, they will) hasn't struck. Maybe luck has something to do with this. Imagine if Reagan had carried the day in 1978, and the Panama Canal treaties had been rejected in the Senate. The canal, says Mandelbaum, "might have become the focal point of Central American hostility to the United States, the inspiration for large demonstrations, and even the object of sabotage or direct military assault."

Terrorism. Reagan has had good luck and bad in combating terrorism. You can't credit Reagan policies for the relative calm in the Middle East. Call it good fortune. Reagan had a hostage crisis, in Beirut in 1985, but it did not pose a grave threat to America's image or interests, and it ended peacefully and quickly after Reagan responded with Carter-like passivity. That was good luck. Bad luck struck Reagan in Lebanon when 250 Marines were killed in a terrorist bombing. The president has been reluctant to strike back at terrorists for fear of injuring innocent civilians. He captured the *Achille Lauro* hijackers without loss of life, which was lucky. But someone had to order the interception of the Egyptian plane in which the hijackers were being flown to safety. Reagan did.

The economy. Reagan has achieved reasonably steady economic growth without high inflation, and luck had little to do with it. Give Carter credit for appointing Paul Volcker to the Federal Reserve Board, which squeezed the money supply and drove down the inflation rate. Then give Reagan credit for sticking with Volcker's tight money policy through a deep and painful recession in 1981-82. This policy may have been cruel, but it doused inflation. And interest rates have tumbled. Reagan's tax cuts have helped keep the economy burgeoning. This may be due to increased aggregate demand (Keynesianism) or new incentives (supply-side economics), but the result is the same. Some economists claim Reagan is lucky that deficits haven't ruined the economy by soaking up credit and boosting interest rates. They hadn't counted on investment from abroad taking up the credit slack. That's not luck. It's the way the world economy works now.

Energy. "The price of oil, once sky-high, fell during Reagan's tenure and, more recently, has plummeted," says Cohen. "For Reagan there is effect but no cause." Not quite. There is a cause, or a partial one, and it's decontrol of oil prices. Carter, despite bitter objections by liberal Democrats, pulled off gradual decontrol. When Reagan took office, he made decontrol immediate. More than half of American oil consumption in 1981 was imported oil. Now that's dropped to about one-third. This was bound to affect OPEC, the oil producers' cartel. It's not the only reason that OPEC is falling apart and oil prices are sinking, but it's a major one.

Still, it sometimes seems that God is looking out for Reagan. In 1983 the president was given a basketball at a Rose Garden ceremony honoring the champion Philadelphia 76ers. Walking back to the Oval Office, in front of television cameras, Reagan decided to dribble the

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ball off the lumpy ground. It bounced, straight and true, right back into his hands. If Carter had tried this, the ball surely would have hit a rock and rolled away, leaving him embarrassed. He had an explanation for this. Life, he once said, is unfair.

FRED BARNES

THE MONEY CULTURE

BILLIONAIRE AND BORE

THE BEST way to get rich in America is to buy land and hold onto it. It's worked that way for the past 150 years or so. You have to find the right piece of property, and you have to persevere. But that's all. No particular talent—smart management, mechanical genius, marketing skill—is required. You just have to make a good choice of property, which is usually a matter of luck, and you have to believe that in the future things will be worth more than they are today, which, over the long term, they always have been.

You don't even have to invest money to improve your property. In fact, you're almost better off if you don't. Let the guy next door build the first condo or office building. When he's finished, your land will be worth more, thanks to his investment. And if he's successful at selling his condo units at $200,000 each, you'll probably be able to sell yours at $250,000.

One hundred and seven people on the *Forbes* list of the 400 richest Americans owe their fortunes to real estate. Some of them—such as Samuel LeFrak, Donald Trump, and my former boss Mort Zuckerman—made millions actually developing, in an intelligent way, the property that they owned or leased. But many huge fortunes were made buying (or having one's ancestors do the buying) and sitting.

"People still alive in the Middle West can remember when their towns first began," writes Paul Samuelson in his holy textbook *Economics*. "They will tell you how they might have been rich if their fathers had recognized 100 years ago that the corner of State and Madison would eventually become the center of town and grow tremendously in value as a result of the great increase in urban populations." Of course, knowing that a particular plot of land would end up as the center of town 50 years later is largely a function of guesswork: "Thoughtful people began to wonder why lucky landowners should be permitted to receive these so-called 'unearned land increments.' " One of those thoughtful people was Henry George. In 1886 he was almost elected mayor of New York by running on a platform that called for scrapping other taxes and replacing them with "the single tax"—a heavy impost on the increased value of real estate.

Today we don't tax property speculators more than we tax everyone else. We tax them less. They benefit from a tax code that encourages not only home ownership (which at least makes a little sense) but the ownership of any kind of real property. The lower tax on capital gains, the interest deduction, and the allowance for depreciation (of improvements, not land) all help owners of real estate.

A lucrative variation on the theme of buying land and holding onto it is leasing the mineral rights to land you don't even have to own. Seventy-one people on the *Forbes* 400 owe their fortune to oil. My own experience with oil and real estate barons of the buy-and-hold variety is that they are not particularly bright or imaginative. They have a constipated mien, a meanness, and a pigheadedness.

Consider J. Paul Getty. I recently finished reading the two new biographies, Robert Lenzner's *The Great Getty* (Crown) and Russell Miller's *The House of Getty* (Henry Holt). I was struck by how little Getty did to become a millionaire, and by what a disgusting human being he was.

Getty's major accomplishment was buying oil rights, especially in California and the Neutral Zone between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, drilling, and watching the value of his holdings rise as the price of oil rose. In 1957, at the age of 65, he was recognized by *Fortune* as the richest man in America, with a net worth somewhere between $700 million and one billion dollars. What had he done but buy assets cheaply? That's how he built his art collection, his real estate holdings, and his oil empire.

There is a certain talent in having a nose for a good deal. And there may be some social usefulness in it. When everyone is selling, it's good for society and the economy that there are bargain-hunters willing to buy, to put a floor on a collapsing market. That's what Getty did in California in the 1930s and what Trump did in New York City in the 1970s. Still, successful bargain-hunting is rarely more than lucky guessing. No one knows where the bottom is. Getty had barely more talent or skill than someone who puts it all on number 23 at the roulette wheel in Las Vegas.

Lenzner says in his excellent, tightly written, and highly entertaining book that Getty was a terrible manager. He quotes an oil-industry colleague: "Getty didn't trust anyone. He had lousy people and he liked to set one person against the other." Getty Oil was known as a bad place to work; it attracted mediocrities and "plodders," the only people willing to put up with the old man's autocracy. Another Getty associate, Lenzner discloses, was "flabbergasted and amazed at the way Getty's mind worked. . . . It was as if he had never grown up. I failed to understand where his abilities lay. . . . [He was] a country bumpkin, a hick, a yokel who had become extraordinarily rich."

Getty did have one major skill. He had dozens of girlfriends and was apparently good in bed. Lenzner points out that "he was never seen to be physically affectionate with any woman." But he adds that "von Block [his ghostwriter] and Turrou [security man] were awed by the size of his penis as well as his bank account." Well hung or not, his personal life was a disaster. He had five wives, tiring of each almost immediately after the marriage ceremony

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("My wives married me; I didn't marry them"). He changed his will 21 times, using it as a weapon to punish what he saw as disloyalty. He drove one son to suicide and missed the funeral of another, who died at the age of 12. Miller quotes this chilling entry in Getty's diary: "Funeral bill for Darling Timmy. A sad day. Sent cable to Zone that Aminoil can have 50 percent of Eocene by giving us 50 percent of Burgan and paying 10c per bbl handling. . . ."

Although he partly cultivated a skinflint image for the publicity it brought him, he really was cheap. His secretary "had to check every item in his grocery order before he would pay for it," writes Lenzner, "and throughout his life Getty personally washed his underwear every evening." He liked to save string, Miller says, and "was 'delighted' when he had enough to tie up a parcel."

He was self-obsessed and self-pitying. He published an article in 1965 in the *Saturday Evening Post* called "The World Is Mean to Millionaires." He wrote, "Today almost the only difference between the multimillionaire and the reasonably well-to-do man earning $15,000 to $25,000 a year is that the millionaire works harder, relaxes less, is burdened by greater responsibilities and is exposed to the constant glare of publicity." Poor baby.

Actually, buy-and-hold oil millionaires are filled with angst these days, having watched spot prices fall from $30 a barrel last October to $12 this month. It couldn't happen to a nicer bunch.

JAMES K. GLASSMAN

James K. Glassman, a TNR contributing editor, will be writing a biweekly column called "The Money Culture."

Olof Palme, American.

DEATH OF A PATRIOT

"SOME OF YOU were here when John F. Kennedy was assassinated," Count Wilhelm Wachtmeister, Sweden's ambassador to Washington, told a doleful press conference the day after Olof Palme was murdered. "If you were, then you know something of how we feel." The comparison was apt, and not only because of the shocking manner of both men's deaths. Like Kennedy, Palme came to power in his early 40s and personified youth, vitality, and sophistication. Palme's politics, like Kennedy's, evolved in spite of a family background of wealth and reaction. (Palme's father was an industrialist, his mother a Russian Czarist turned Swedish conservative.) And Palme, like Kennedy, was an inspirational figure to many in the Third World. There were differences between the two men, of course. One difference is this: from the beginning, Palme was considerably more at home with the American liberal left—the stretch of political ground bounded roughly by the views of Norman Thomas at one end and Hubert Humphrey at the other—than Kennedy ever was.

At his press conference the Swedish ambassador found it necessary to deny, for what must have been the thousandth time, that Palme had been "anti-American." Yet that is essentially how he was being pictured in the days after his death. "He often seemed to favor the Soviet Union in East-West disputes," the obituarist of the *New York Times* complained. And in a follow-up story a couple of days later, Barnaby Feder accused him of backing "Communist-led revolutions from Indochina to Nicaragua" and of being "too quick to criticize the United States and too quiet about such matters as human rights in the Soviet Union," a view of Palme unconvincingly attributed to "many Swedes." The overall impression is of Palme as a routine *New Statesman*-type Euro-leftist, blaming the world's troubles on U.S. imperialism and finding little to choose between American democracy and Soviet totalitarianism. That impression could hardly be more wrong.

OLOF PALME was more than "pro-American," he was "American"—as American as apple pie with lingonberry sauce. He spent what he always described as the most formative year of his life, the year he turned 21, in the United States. He got his bachelor's degree in politics and economics from Kenyon College, a small Episcopal college in the incorrigibly American environs of Columbus, Ohio, in 1948. He wrote his senior honors thesis on the United Automobile Workers union. He then hit the road, hitchhiking all over the country for three months, meeting hundreds of citizens along the way and learning something about their wealth and their poverty. He ended up in Detroit, where he spent hours talking with one of his heroes, Walter Reuther.

Why did the president of the UAW take time out of a busy schedule to shoot the breeze with an itinerant foreign student? I suspect it was simply because the student was Swedish. It would be hard to overestimate the prestige Sweden had in those days among Americans of Reuther's views. For CIO unionists, ADAers, moderate socialists, Democrats of the Minnesota DFL stripe, and the like, Sweden was a magic land, a place of pilgrimage, a concrete demonstration that a society could be both just and free. Such Americans were accustomed to learning from Swedes. Young Palme reversed the usual pattern. This time it was the Swede who was doing the learning, the Swede who was making the pilgrimage. Palme was in the habit of remarking, during his many subsequent visits to this country, that the United States had made him a socialist. And it wasn't because he was repelled by what he found here, but because he was inspired by it.

When Palme began to speak against the war in Vietnam, beginning in 1965, he did so with the special passion, the outraged indignation, of an American. Unlike certain other European leftists, he did not greet the war with the smug

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"...great revolutions..." *"We know lots of revolutions, great revolutions, and magnificent people, who after taking over power, produced systems that were much worse than the ones they destroyed. We don't want to make this mistake. We will not."*

--Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa in a "Morning Edition" interview in Gdansk, Poland, with National Public Radio's European correspondent Neal Conan.

"I never share blame, I never share credit, and I never share desserts. It's just not my style."

--Beverly Sills, New York City Opera general director, in an interview on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

"Drunk they (the Russians) defeated Napoleon. Drunk they beat Hitler. Drunk they could win against NATO."

--Edward Luttwak, defense analyst and author of "The Pentagon and the Art of War," talking with National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" host Bob Edwards about Soviet military strength.

"We are so different, and yet, we are all one." *"I've never seen so many women, of so many different ages, colors, sizes and shapes, and I think it's amazing. We are so different, and yet, we are all one.*

--A delegate to the United Nations' World Conference on Women, talking with National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" co-host Susan Stamberg in Nairobi, Kenya.

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satisfaction of one who has at last been proved right about those nasty Americans. He thought more highly of us than that (and in this sense he did indeed have a "double standard"). Unlike certain other European socialist statesmen—Harold Wilson comes to mind—he did not regard silence on Vietnam as an act of friendship to the United States. And unlike many other "moderate" protesters on both sides of the Atlantic, he did not consider that he had anything to prove where anticommunism was concerned.

Palme learned anticommunism as much from his friends on the American democratic left as from his comrades in the European social democracy. He understood, of course, that anticommunism alone, like antifascism alone, is a poor guide to action unless it is a by-product of a positive democratic vision. Unlike many conservatives, he understood that the basic trouble with communism is a shortage of political freedom, not an excess of economic egalitarianism. And his was an anticommunism of action.

In 1948 he went from Detroit to Prague, where, representing Sweden at a meeting of the Soviet-controlled International Union of Students, he made a speech attacking Stalin; after that speech, a group from the Russian delegation came to his hotel room and beat him up. (His American counterpart at that IUS meeting, by the way, was Allard Lowenstein, whom he resembled in many ways and with whom he later worked to set up the rival International Student Conference.) While he was at it, Palme married a young Czechoslovak woman he had met at the Prague meeting. The reason was simply to help her get out; once she was safe in Sweden, they divorced as planned.

His services to democracy tended to be similarly concrete. He was instrumental in mobilizing the cash and muscle that built a strong democratic left for post-Franco Spain and post-Salazar Portugal—a crucial precondition for the consolidation of liberty in those countries and the consequent decline of their Communist parties. Every obituary of Palme mentioned the famous photograph of him marching alongside a North Vietnamese diplomat in an anti-Vietnam War demonstration in 1968. But the biggest demonstration in which Palme marched in 1968—it also happened to be the biggest demonstration in the history of Sweden—was a massive protest against the Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia.

As Palme's assassin knew very well, he was accessible. I don't run into prime ministers that often, but I did see Palme a half-dozen times in one setting or another. The first time was in 1975, at a party thrown by Michael Harrington's Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee at the Workmen's Circle in New York. The last time was in 1984, at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, where Palme had just delivered the first Jerry Wurf Memorial Lecture. Both times Palme stayed late and ended up in the middle of a knot of American labor-union people, students, and intellectuals, disputing and laughing and asking as many questions as he was answering. He seemed right at home. And why not? He *was* right at home.

HENDRIK HERTZBERG

Haunted by a fixed idea.

CONTRA DELUSION

RONALD REAGAN comes into the *contra* aid debate with a less than impressive record of judging the recipients of U.S. military aid. Fewer than six months ago he asked for military aid for Haitian strongman Jean-Claude Duvalier. A little more than a year ago he asked for $100 million in military assistance to Ferdinand Marcos. For five years running he urged Congress to aid the military dictatorship of Guatemala, a regime that the democratically elected president of that country has since denounced as incompetent, corrupt, and brutal. And back in his first days in office, Reagan repeatedly urged military aid to Argentina's governing junta—the crew recently convicted of killing at least 9,000 people. All of this U.S. aid justified in the name of defending democracy, all of the recipients now reviled by democrats in their own countries.

Are the anti-Sandinista rebels the latest in the parade of scoundrels incapable of sustaining support of their own people despite U.S. assistance? Yes, says Robert Leiken, one of the few people who have studied the *contras* with some dispassion. (See "Reform the Contras," page 18.) Leiken nevertheless supports U.S. aid to the *contras*, urging that the United States reorganize the entire movement and replace its "mostly reactionary" leaders with democrats. His proposal is appealing but farfetched. As Edgar Chamorro, a former anti-Sandinista leader, recounted in these pages last year (See "Confessions of a Contra," August 5, 1985), in 1982 the Reagan administration selected the *contra* leaders it wanted, paid them thousands of dollars, and instructed them on the finer points of deceiving the American public. Now they command thousands of troops, enjoy White House hospitality, and receive scores of votes in Congress. Given the choice of giving up control of the movement they founded or giving up U.S. aid, there is little doubt they would call our bluff.

Most *contra* supporters are not as critical as Leiken in their sympathy. Last week my colleagues at THE NEW REPUBLIC dismissed the issue of some of the *contras'* Somocista National Guard background with the observation that their top leader was once put in jail by Somoza (for less than a month, it turns out). Despite their training from the Argentine military officers who specialized in terrorism, despite their continuing refusal to delegate significant power to the democrats who have joined the rebel movement, the *contra* leaders are confidently judged to be good democrats. In the words of the TNR editorial, "the relevant question is American intentions today."

This phrase is suggestive of a far larger phenomenon that has blossomed, not among centrist Democrats who support *contra* aid, but on the right wing of Reagan's Washington. Just as every man becomes the thing he hates, so

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conservatism in the 1980s increasingly has the flavor of radicalism in the 1930s and 1960s. Then as now, good intentions justify supporting revolutions. Third World adventurers, with well-known antidemocratic records, receive credulous adulation from college students and intellectuals alike: Che Guevara and Ho Chi Minh have been succeeded by Jonas Savimbi, Enrique Bermudez, even Roberto d'Aubuisson. Those who suggest that some critical distinctions are in order are accused of timidity, if not bad faith. Sixties radicals claimed that if you thought American involvement in Vietnam was a bad idea, you were hypocritical not to support the Cuban revolution. Their spiritual heirs are those who contend that if you believe the United States support for Marcos was wrong, you are logically compelled to favor sponsoring civil war in Central America. Wildly ambitious goals are on everyone's lips. Once it was a classless society by 1970; now it's a democratic Nicaragua by Christmas.

In this atmosphere, intellectual orthodoxy is a requirement. Court philosophers and writers reflexively shade their eyes from unpleasant facts. Michael Novak, the neoconservative Catholic theologian who supports Reagan's Central America policy, would not think of objecting to the administration's kindly treatment of Roberto d'Aubuisson, despite abundant public evidence that d'Aubuisson was responsible for the assassination of a Salvadoran archbishop. Intellectual candor would be a disservice to the ideological cause.

This party-line discipline is essential in the battle for *contra* aid. It is impermissible, for example, for any conservative intellectual to discuss—let alone criticize—Jeane Kirkpatrick's enthusiasm in 1981 and 1982 for the Argentine war criminals. Does this episode indicate anything about the chief theoretician of Reagan foreign policy? Does it suggest anything about the foreign policy that now demands funding the *contras*? The unwillingness to admit error can only lead to worse errors.

The bottom line for *contra* crusaders is the same as the bottom line for fellow-traveling radicals: if you are not on the right side of history, you are a traitor. As White House communications director Patrick Buchanan puts it with characteristic nuance, anybody who is not in favor of military aid is a Soviet collaborator, a "co-guarantor of the Brezhnev Doctrine." Conservative Republicans such as Kansas senator Nancy Kassebaum have rightly denounced the administration for its McCarthyite tactics.

THERE ARE three questions for U.S. policy in Nicaragua: Which policy will best contribute to the security of U.S. territory? Which will contribute to the growth of democratic institutions in Latin America that promote our interests? And which promises to achieve these goals with minimum loss of life, especially American lives?

Getting Soviet-bloc advisers out of Nicaragua would obviously remove a distant but real threat to U.S. territory. Thus Latin American democrats and opponents of *contra* aid publicly favor the provisions of the Contadora treaty calling for removal of all foreign military advisers from the region with on-site inspection verification procedures. *Contra* supporters deride the very idea, contending that anyone who thinks such a provision could be enforced is hopelessly naive.

The only effective way to remove the Soviet-bloc advisers, it is argued, is to force them out. Nobody will quite specify how much force it will take, but it is clear that the $100 million Reagan is requesting won't come close to doing the trick. The TNR editorial recommended American advisers, but demurred from saying if they would make the difference. If all else fails to change Sandinista behavior—and everything short of advisers that the administration has tried for the last 61 months has failed—Reagan is logically committed to removing the Soviet-bloc influence with U.S. troops. Might the costs of a generally effective, though not perfect, treaty be lower in the long run than an escalation of the civil war followed by the sending of U.S. troops? The question is already considered unpatriotic by *contra* supporters. As the TNR editorial asserted, anybody who questions the wisdom of having the United States alone "set the level of violence" in Central America is counseling "pure defeatism."

IN ANY CASE, *contra* supporters insist that this commitment is less risky than leaving the Sandinista government in power, restrained only by a treaty. They say that an aggressive Sandinista army would quickly pounce on the region's fledgling democracies. But the leaders of those democracies insist that they do not fear Sandinista aggression nearly so much as the prospect of the militarization of the region. As Guatemalan president Vinicio Cerezo put it, "We don't want to have the best military in Central America, we want to have the best democracy." This attitude too is derided by *contra* supporters as dissembling in the face of Sandinista intimidation.

Only by ousting the Sandinistas, administration spokesmen argue, can the democratic institutions essential to a free society be protected. They point out that in the last six years the Sandinistas have censored *La Prensa*, brutalized the Miskito Indians, arrested leaders of the opposition parties (even killing some), and silenced independent trade unions. But what is a Latin American democrat like Vinicio Cerezo supposed to make of this criticism? Of course, it is correct, and the repression may well get worse. But in Guatemala over the last five years there has never been a moderate newspaper to be censored, thousands of Indians have been slaughtered or relocated to "model villages," hundreds of Christian Democrats and Social Democrats have been assassinated, and dozens of democratic labor union leaders have been kidnapped and killed. And in the midst of this reign of terror (far worse than any perpetrated thus far by the Sandinistas), Ronald Reagan turned up in Guatemala City to say the government was getting a "bum rap" for human rights abuses.

It would be comforting to think that this was a Reaganesque slip. But when the leader of Guatemala's human

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rights movement was assassinated by government security forces last July, Assistant Secretary of State Elliott Abrams repeated the Guatemalan military's canard that the woman had died in an "accident." (Abrams has since acknowledged the error.) Might these kinds of misstatements make us slightly more cautious about proclaiming our good intentions? In a letter to the editor in this issue, Abrams forthrightly reports that the administration "needs no lessons" about Guatemala.

No wonder Latin American democrats are vexed by the *contra* crusade. Vinicio Cerezo, who survived three government assassination attempts while pressing for Guatemalan democracy, is now said to be too intimidated to speak publicly about the alleged dangers to democracy posed by the Sandinistas. Argentine president Rául Alfonsín, who was a human rights lawyer when the Argentine generals were dining in the White House, is said not to understand Sandinista insincerity about human rights. But if these democrats cannot be trusted to protect democracies from a violently repressive regime that uses terrorism as a matter of policy, who can?

Some critics, such as House Speaker Tip O'Neill, believe that the Reagan administration is obsessed with a military solution in Central America. This is unfair. *Contra* supporters sincerely hope to avoid sending U.S. troops to Central America and have an idealistic resistance to Soviet ambitions. The problem lies deeper—in a lingering suspicion of democrats everywhere. Pat Buchanan's fear that a majority of the U.S. Congress may be Soviet quislings should not be dismissed as hyperbole. Nor should the accusation that democratic leaders in Latin America are too frightened to speak their minds. Both are the expression of a belief that democrats throughout the hemisphere are too weak for their own good. Both contain a hint that if American democrats, North and South, refuse to help the *contras*, they will be considered part of the Sandinista problem.

Such is the mood fostered by the single-minded determination to end Sandinista repression by funding civil war. In *Nostromo*, Joseph Conrad's epic of intrigue in a Central American republic, the administrator of the country's silver mine reluctantly launches a political enterprise much like the anti-Sandinista rebellion. He imagines announcing to his American employer, "I am forced to take up openly the plan of a provincial revolution as the only way of placing the enormous material interests involved in the prosperity and peace of [the region] in a position of permanent safety." But as he rehearses the words in his mind, his wife watches him with dread. She sees in his gaze "the energetic concentration of a will haunted by a fixed idea." And she thinks, "A man haunted by a fixed idea is insane. He is dangerous even if that idea is an idea of justice; for may he not bring the heaven down pitilessly upon a loved head?" The Reagan administration has the fixed idea, Latin American democrats the exposed heads.

JEFFERSON MORLEY

Don't give me liberty.

FALWELL'S NEW NAME

LAST YEAR WAS difficult for Jerry Falwell. On May 3 he took time to write to me, saying he had "absolutely failed to raise the money necessary to keep the Moral Majority moving ahead. . . . Repeatedly—I am asking myself and others—where are we failing? *Have we won so many moral battles that our friends think the major conflict is over?* . . .

"Yes we are winning the battle against the efforts of militant homosexuals. . . . The porn kings are now losing money heavily. . . . But now—we face the possibility of losing the most important battle of all. . . . If this country compromises with our defense against the Communist nuclear weapons, then sex and violence on television will become a moot issue. . . . I have no intentions of allowing Tip O'Neill and Jim Wright to place my children and grandchildren in Communist slavery or worse."

Falwell assured me he would do everything possible to prevent such a thing from happening. "I beg you, wake up! . . . Murray, can you send $5.00? Can you even double that and send $10.00? . . . President Reagan needs you! I need you!"

I didn't reply, and Jerry contacted me again in August, this time via a United Express Gram, whatever that is. "Moments ago I was told my family and home would be blown up today," Jerry informed me. "Sometimes, I actually feel that the Falwell family has been living in a foxhole for the last several years. . . . Militant homosexuals, pornography peddlers, and abortionists have often threatened our lives. . . . But since my return from South Africa, communist terrorists are openly threatening to kill me and my family because of my campaign to stop the Soviet Union from taking over the vital minerals, strategic sea lanes, and naval bases of South Africa.

"I am willing to confront the death threats, the twisted and biased media coverage—but only if I have the help, prayers, and support of my friends. . . . I must ask you to immediately send an emergency gift of $100, $50, $25."

Again, I didn't respond. Jerry sent me yet another letter less than a week later. This time he sounded desperate: "How on earth is Moral Majority going to survive the next weeks—or even the next few days? If I cannot find the support of friends like you—I'm afraid we are in serious trouble. And pornographers, militant gays, abortionists, and liberals will continue to lead this country straight down the path of moral decay."

Now Jerry's got a new sales pitch. To counteract the public's impressive distaste for him ("The highest negatives of anybody except Khomeini," says one Republican pollster), Falwell announced in January that he was going to change the name of the Moral Majority. It will henceforth be known as the Liberty Federation.

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"The press for six years has bloodied and beaten the name 'Moral Majority,' " Falwell explained. Many people "who will say, yes to everything we are saying . . . dare not stand with us on particular policies for fear of being tarred." The Liberty Federation will also have a political and educational arm called the Liberty Alliance. And it will publish its own newspaper, called the *Liberty Report*. Falwell announced last year that he was changing the name of his Liberty Baptist College to that of the Liberty University. The school is located on Liberty Mountain outside Lynchburg, Virginia, which Falwell now refers to as the town of Liberty. It is not known what the residents of Lynchburg think of Falwell's singular decision to change the name of their town. But if they remember anything about the history of the political groups using the name "Liberty," they will ask the Reverend to please shut up.

IN 1934 a number of the nation's millionaires worked together to create an organization called the American Liberty League. The idea for the league originated with R. M. Carpenter, a retired vice president of Du Pont. Subsidized with millions of dollars from its members, the Liberty League engaged in a massive public relations campaign, churning out pamphlets, canned newspaper stories, press releases, and radio speeches, all of which reported that Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal was part of a worldwide Marxist conspiracy. By 1936 Republican presidential nominee Alf Landon described the Liberty League's endorsement as a "kiss of death." *New York Times* columnist Arthur Krock wrote that the chairman of the Republican Party "would have walked a mile out of his way rather than be seen in the company of a Liberty Leaguer."

The Liberty or Death Committee, formed in Freeport, New York, on July 4, 1962, carried on this tradition. Its founder, Dorothea Terwilliger, stated that its goals were to have Americans "display Old Glory on every day, not just on national holidays." Showing the flag, she said, was the best way to "protest the 'too soft on communism' line of the State Department." The committee's main objective was to require prayer in the public schools: "The day the Supreme Court took God out of the schools, they ruled in favor of obscenity," Terwilliger declared.

The Liberty Legion was established in the mid-1960s to get rid of all intellectuals. The legion's manifesto explained that "the word intellectual is a synonym for the word atheist and the words communism and Marxism are useful to us only if we clearly and absolutely see them as synonyms for intellectualism and atheism." Apparently because the Liberty Legion could find few followers for its philosophy, it changed its name in 1968—to the Liberty Party.

That same year retired right-wing general Edwin Walker announced the creation of the Liberty Network to compete with the nation's leftist newspapers and television networks. Not much else is known about the Liberty Network because when the general discussed it, few people could make much sense of what he was saying. "Our efforts," he explained, "will extend for all Americans, to 1968 and 1976—very significant years—and on up to 1000 A.D." Walker also said the Liberty Network would investigate the Kennedy assassination. Walker had become obsessed with the case after the Warren Commission alleged that Lee Harvey Oswald had unsuccessfully tried to assassinate Walker just before the Kennedy assassination. The new investigation should "start all over again with the fact that Oswald knew Rubenstein and Rubenstein knew Oswald," Walker declared at a press conference.

"Do you mean Jack Ruby?" a reporter asked.

"I mean Rubenstein," Walker replied, "You can call him anything you want!"

THEN THERE are the publishing houses. Liberty Bell Press of Reedy, West Virginia, publishes two magazines, the *Liberty Bell* and the *White Power Report*. The Liberty Bell Press also distributes stickers declaring: "Hitler was Right: Communism is Jewish!" Among the titles in the Liberty Bell Press catalog are "The Jewish Associates of Benedict Arnold" and "Jewish Gamblers Corrupt American Baseball" (an apparent follow-up to another Liberty Bell Press offering, "Jewish Degradation of American Baseball"), and of course, *Mein Kampf*.

The Liberty Bell Press, though, shouldn't be confused with Liberty Bell Books of Sedona, Arizona. During the 1960s this outfit published a book written by a couple of former tax accountants called *We Will Survive*. The book was written, advertisements declared, for "the specific purpose of preparing the militant, well-informed, Christian patriot, for survival during the violence, turbulence, and chaos that is now occurring in sections of the United States." Chapter titles include "Basic Rules of Terror" and "Do's and Don't's with Explosives."

Then, of course, there is the Liberty Lobby, an organization based on Capitol Hill and doing well in the age of Reagan. The Liberty Lobby's political orientation was summarized by its founder, Willis Carto, when he wrote to an associate, "Hitler's defeat was the defeat of Europe. And America. How could we have been so blind? The blame, it seems, must be laid at the door of the international Jews. It was their propaganda, lies, and demands which blinded the West to what Germany was doing. . . . If Satan himself, with all of his superhuman genius and diabolical ingenuity at his command, had tried to create a permanent disintegration and force for the destruction of the nations, he could have done no better than to invent the Jews."

And now the Liberty Federation? Suddenly, Moral Majority doesn't sound so bad.

MURRAY WAAS

Murray Waas's profile of Senator Alfonse D'Amato, "The Soul of a New Machine Politician," appeared in the March 10 issue.

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Forging a democratic resistance.

REFORM THE CONTRAS

BY ROBERT LEIKEN

CONGRESS FACES AN excruciating dilemma in its vote on aid to the Nicaraguan rebels. Should it approve President Reagan's proposal for military aid and underwrite a mainly reactionary leadership unable to gain the full support of the Nicaraguan or the American people? Or should it vote down military aid and face the inevitable consequences—both for Nicaragua and eventually for Central America, Mexico, and the United States—of a consolidated, Soviet-backed expansionist Sandinista regime?

In recent weeks the Sandinistas have launched a major diplomatic and public relations campaign aimed at convincing the world that they are David fighting the U.S. Goliath, and that they will be responsive and fair to their people just as soon as the gringo guns are lowered. But few are still naive enough to believe Sandinista promises.

On October 15 President Daniel Ortega announced "emergency measures" that virtually suspended all civil liberties, including the rights of speech, assembly, personal security, freedom of the press, movement, to form labor organizations, and to strike. Ortega blamed "U.S. imperialism" and rebel "sabotage and political destabilization" for the new crackdown. The real target of this latest crackdown is Nicaragua's political opposition, independent press, labor unions, and above all, its religious organizations.

From February 8 to 15, I participated as an observer on a mission to Nicaragua of the International League for Human Rights. There was overwhelming evidence of an intensifying campaign of intimidation, harassment, and coercion. According to Monsignor Bosco Vivas, auxiliary bishop of Managua, more than 100 Catholic lay and religious workers and 50 priests have been detained and interrogated since October. Evangelical ministers and lay workers have been subjected to the same treatment. The Sandinistas have prohibited open-air Masses, shut down the Catholic radio station, suppressed its newspaper, confiscated its printing press, seized its social welfare office, prevented the establishment of a human rights office, illegally drafted seminarians into military service, and imprisoned and deported priests.

Opposition political parties and labor unions have also been singled out. Two Social Christian Party activists were brutally murdered in November. The International League for Human Rights has a list of 57 members of PLI (Independent Liberal Party) from Condega in Esteli province who are under detention. The Sandinista attacks and intimidation have focused on less visible opposition activists in outlying provinces. But the campaign has been sweeping—virtually all political parties have felt its effect, including not only the right wing and the center, but also the Communists, Socialists, Social Christians, and Social Democratic parties. In response, a broad civil anti-Sandinista front is slowly emerging. The once-enormous popular support for the Sandinistas has virtually vanished, and their power now depends on a military and security apparatus built by Moscow and Havana.

After talking to many professionals, and to union, party, and religious leaders and activists, it was clear that there is a major Sandinista effort to infiltrate opposition groups and to coerce members into collaborating with Sandinista-created "internal fronts" of the FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Force). Later these activists are pressured to denounce fellow members as FDN agents to justify repression against their organizations.

We also talked to scores of political prisoners and their families. The International League for Human Rights estimates that there are now between 3,500 and 7,000 political prisoners in Nicaragua, not including the 2,500 National Guardsmen. It is impossible to be more precise because of the secrecy of Nicaragua's prisons and its state security system, which controls the clandestine state security prisons. Political prisoners are subject to solitary confinement in subterranean cells without sanitation facilities. They are denied food and water for as long as four days at a time. We heard of cases of simulated executions, threats to family members of prisoners, including their pregnant wives, and a gamut of psychological torments known in Nicaragua as "white torture." We also spoke to individuals who had suffered physical torture.

In the remote Indian communities of the Atlantic coast, Sandinista repression is less discreet. The Sandinistas are waging an air war involving bombing and strafing of villages and noncombatants. On February 8, 1986, *New York Times* correspondent Steven Kinzer described "craters made by rockets and 500-pound bombs" dropped by government planes on Indian villages while pursuing Miskito leader Brooklyn Rivera. Rivera succeeded in escaping through the remarkable cooperative efforts of Miskito villagers. Rivera's Misurasata group receives no support of any kind from the U.S. government. In fact, the U.S.-backed FDN (with U.S. government and Honduran government compliance) has prevented Rivera from entering Honduras to meet with Indian refugees and leaders there.

Robert Leiken is a senior associate at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

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Misurasata had met several times with the Sandinista government in an effort to reach a peaceful settlement recognizing Indian rights. Despite their promises of peace and reconciliation, Sandinista troops carried out this recent search-and-destroy operation with the full knowledge of the government in Managua.

Leaders of Nicaragua's internal civilian opposition believe that the Sandinistas are out to destroy them, and that the rebels are at the very least a necessary evil. One left-of-center leader told me that if there is any chance for negotiations now with the Sandinistas, the U.S. would be "foolish" to remove the one instrument of pressure that has a real effect on the Sandinistas: the armed resistance.

THE PROBLEM confronting Congress and the American people is with the "instrument of pressure" designed to moderate or to remove the Sandinistas. The Nicaraguan armed opposition has been divided into as many as six different groups, with varying ideological orientations, political bases, and military potential. The United States has by and large supported the FDN, formally under the umbrella organization UNO, United Nicaraguan Opposition.

The FDN was created by Argentine military and security agents and by the CIA. Strong ties of loyalty, or fealty, have developed between CIA officials, acting as imperial patrons, and their colonial adjutants in the FDN. Most of the FDN High Command was drawn from the National Guard. These officers are intensely loyal to Commander in Chief Enrique Bermudez, and have the allegiance of some of the field commanders. However, Bermudez—along with Aldolfo Calero, who was installed as the political leader of the FDN by the CIA, and Aristides Sanchez, a former landowner—forms part of a cabal closely linked to a shadowy network of expropriated landowners, businessmen, former associates of Somoza, and U.S. right-wing donors. These exiles influence the FDN leadership through family ties or as former or current employers.

These leaders have been reluctant to unite with the other resistance organizations and are in turn distrusted by them. They have resisted efforts to democratize the FDN and UNO apparatus, and thus have often stood in the way of the effort to create a unified, democratic national resistance to the Sandinistas. Above all, the struggle in Nicaragua is a national struggle, yet to date it has been led by a small ideological sector of pre-revolutionary Nicaragua.

This is true even though the popular base of the resistance has grown enormously. There are some 20,000 armed insurgents in a Nicaraguan population of three million, of which the FDN makes up some 12,000. The FDN claims that 40 percent of its troops are former Sandinista soldiers and fewer than two percent are former National Guardsmen. Among the rebel groups there is much unhappiness with the current CIA-imposed leadership. *Comandantes* in the field often share their troops' resentment of the FDN's leadership. A former associate of rebel leader Eden Pastora has described these field commanders as "a mixed bag of Zapatas and Pancho Villas," i.e., troops' peasant revolutionaries and rebel brigands.

Recently the FDN has suffered serious military reverses. These have been due to the intensive Soviet-Cuban training of the Sandinista forces, to their acquisition of Soviet helicopters, and to the introduction of Soviet heavy artillery. The FDN troops are poorly trained and suffer from a lack not only of equipment but of combat officers. The ratio of officers to troops is about one to 200. This means that the FDN cannot break down into small units in the face of Sandinista bombardments and artillery, and it has lacked the trained organizers necessary to create a political and military infrastructure.

Nonetheless, the FDN receives information and aid from local residents and is enjoying substantial and growing support among Nicaragua's small farmers and campesinos. FDN fighters are peasants with deep economic, political, and ideological grievances against the regime. They have maintained high morale despite a lack of military equipment and training—and sometimes boots and food. The FDN, in short, is a movement with a peasant base, populist middle-echelon officers, and a mostly reactionary leadership imposed and maintained by the United States.

The most important groups outside of UNO are BOS (Southern Opposition Bloc), led by Alfredo Cesar and Eden Pastora, and Misurasata. The political tendencies of these groups is social democratic. They have also enjoyed strong local support and fight on without U.S. funding. Only the unity of all anti-Sandinista forces and the establishment of strong southern and Atlantic coast fronts will turn the armed resistance into a militarily viable enterprise.

The disunity of Nicaraguan resistance forces and their failure to develop a democratic leadership have helped to isolate internationally our Central American policy. The administration's own policy and rhetoric have contributed to this isolation. The national and democratic character of the Nicaraguan civilian and armed struggle has often been drowned in a torrent of administration invective that has conveyed both impotent rage and hegemonic presumption. This rhetoric buttresses those among the Nicaraguan civilian and armed resistance who prefer to wait passively for an imagined U.S. invasion. And it has offended the dignity of Latin American governments, which are sensitive to U.S. bullying and mired in debt to U.S. banks.

ONE MUST HOPE that the bipartisan policy that helped oust dictators in the Philippines and Haiti will open a new chapter for Nicaragua as well. The United States needs a policy that has a political, diplomatic, and organizational dimension as well as a military one. Our goal should be to promote a broad national movement for a democratic solution to the Nicaraguan crisis. This solution could come about if the Sandinista government accepts the February 6 proposal of the six Nicaraguan political parties (ranging from the left to the center to the right) for a cease-fire, amnesty, lifting of the state of siege, and a new election schedule. It could also come from direct

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dialogue between the Sandinistas and the armed and civilian opposition, or as UNO leader Arturo Cruz has recently suggested, with the civilian opposition tacitly representing the armed resistance as well.

These offers—along with Salvadoran president José Napoleón Duarte's March 4 proposal to Daniel Ortega for parallel government-guerrilla negotiations in the two countries—provide a framework for a viable regional peace settlement. In the face of imminent U.S. military aid and increased diplomatic pressure, the Sandinistas may choose to follow the course of the Guatemalan military, permitting real elections while seeking to retain control of the army for the long haul.

BUT FOR any of this to happen, the United States must reform its policy. It must support the creation of a broad internal and external united front against the Sandinistas. It should encourage efforts of the political opposition from the Communist and Socialist parties on the left, through the Social Democratic, Social Christian, PLI, and Conservative Democratic parties in the center, and the Conservative parties on the right to unite their efforts for political reform inside Nicaragua. At the same time it should support efforts to create a coalition of the resistance forces, including BOS and Misurasata, which would then receive U.S. military aid. In this respect the Nicaraguan opposition must take a leaf from the Sandinistas. Only a broad unity movement with an armed component was capable of forcing out Somoza. Only a broad unity movement will force the Sandinistas to hold elections, or to negotiate, or to relinquish power—whichever they choose.

At the same time, UNO must reform if it is to become an effective political, ideological, diplomatic, and military force. The administration must abandon its special relationship with Calero and Sanchez, allowing UNO to become a democratic institution. Only under the leadership of true democrats united with other anti-Sandinista groups can UNO-FDN become an organization capable of gaining the sympathy of America.

This means that UNO must have control of all public and private funds it receives. It must have the right, upon the recommendation of the recently created UNO Human Rights Office, to punish officers and troops found guilty of human rights violations. Although UNO should not be involved in the day-to-day conduct of the war, it should have final control over military appropriations, strategy, and general policy and organization. These reforms, as Senator Nancy Kassebaum recently stated, are up to "the *contras* themselves," but Congress should vote no military aid until they are undertaken.

However, sufficient military aid to a united and democratic resistance is needed desperately. Once firm steps are taken to strengthen the social, political, and ideological character of the resistance, the resistance will have a real chance of success.

It is no secret that there is an atmosphere of bad faith between the administration and Congress on the Nicaraguan issue. Many Democrats have been reluctant to recognize the true situation in Nicaragua because in addition to their fear of direct U.S. military involvement, they fear vindicating the president. They have preferred to assail him because they feel he is weak on this issue. At the same time the administration has itself often sought to exploit Nicaragua for narrow domestic gains, most recently through blatant Red-baiting by senior White House official Pat Buchanan. Some in the administration seem more interested in fighting the Democrats than in effectively opposing the Sandinistas.

Last June the president wrote a letter to Representative Dave McCurdy that seemed a move toward ending this debilitating and self-destructive quarrel. In it he promised not to "seek the military overthrow of the Sandinista government or to put in its place a government based on supporters of the old Somoza regime," and committed himself to urge rebel leaders to investigate human rights abuses and take action to prevent further abuses. Many members of Congress feel that the administration has not fulfilled these promises. This time promises will not be enough.

Commenting on the president's promises, House Speaker Thomas P. O'Neill vowed that the Democrats would "hold him to his new position." Yet Congress has done nothing to accomplish that end. Some Democrats who continue to cherish illusions that the Sandinistas can be reformed by diplomacy argue that reforming the rebels is too difficult. In fact, they are amenable to reform, especially now. Their movement now rests on a popular rebellion, with new field commanders who are more responsive to pressure, both from within and without. Guerrilla armies are not created overnight. The Salvadoran FMLN has been in the field for nearly 15 years. The Vietnamese and Chinese fought for more than a decade before creating effective guerrilla armies. The American people and Congress and the administration should be aware that armed resistance to the Sandinistas must necessarily take the form of a protracted struggle. This will require a sustained bipartisan U.S. policy of support.

TO ESTABLISH and sustain such a policy, the administration must make a good-faith effort to give Contadora a chance. Contadora's efforts at achieving peace and national reconciliation will not be successful without military pressure. But the administration should agree to delay arms deliveries so as to permit Contadora and the Central American countries to reach a settlement. The delay, however, should not be so long as to allow the Sandinistas to repress rebel civilian supporters in contested areas while it pretends to negotiate.

We have seen in Afghanistan and in the Philippines that the American people are willing to support national and democratic movements in the Third World. They will not support a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua. They would back a national movement for democracy. They would support a true national resistance movement but not a proxy army. The administration and Congress must put aside narrow partisan interests to forge a national policy toward Nicaragua.

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The poignant story of Frank Sinatra's politics.

WHEN OLD BLUE EYES WAS 'RED'

BY JON WIENER

I REMEMBER A SINATRA who didn't pal around with rich Republicans. During the early 1950s, at my Sunday school in St. Paul, Minnesota, one of the highlights of the year was the annual screening of *The House I Live In*, a short film starring a young and skinny Sinatra. In it, he told a gang of kids that racial and religious differences "make no difference except to a Nazi or somebody who's stupid." He sang about "The people that I work with / The workers that I meet.... The right to speak my mind out / That's America to me." *The House I Live In*, made at the peak of Sinatra's popularity, won him a special Academy Award in 1945. Four years later his career was in ruins, in the wake of charges that he was tied to both the Mafia and the Communists. Forty years later his career is legend, his politics solidly conservative.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

At first glance Sinatra's political odyssey from left to right seems to have followed a well-trod path. "Maturity" has been defined by figures as different as John dos Passos and Jerry Rubin as the abandonment of youthful ideals. But Sinatra's case is different. Beaten down as an activist leftist, his career destroyed by the right-wing press, he made a stunning comeback, then found himself snubbed and abused by the liberals whose views he shared. Only then did he sign up with his old right-wing enemies.

The House I Live In was a turning point. The *Cumulative Index to Publications of the Committee on Un-American Activities* (HUAC), a handy list of everyone named as a communist in 20 years of committee hearings, indicates that in the eight years following *The House I Live In* Sinatra was named 12 times. The *New York Times Index* for 1949 contains a single stunning cross-reference: "Sinatra, Frank: *See* US—Espionage." Sinatra reportedly denied the reports that he "followed or appeased some of the CP [Communist Party] line program over a long period of time."

But once the allegations had been made, Sinatra's image in the press changed dramatically. He was first linked to the Mafia in a February 1947 gossip column that reported he had been seen in Havana with mobster Lucky Luciano and other "scum" and "goons" who "find the south salubrious in the winter, or grand-jury time." The columnist's source, and the source of many subsequent Mafia-Sinatra stories, turns out to have been Harry Anslinger, a crony of J. Edgar Hoover. Anslinger served as head of the federal narcotics bureau and was out to get Sinatra because he was a "pink."

"Frank's big nosedive," as the pundits called it, began on April 8, 1947. That was the night he punched Hearst gossip columnist Lee Mortimer at Ciro's celebrated Hollywood night spot. The Hearst papers went wild, running whole pages on the incident, repeating the Mafia story and HUAC charges. "Sinatra Faces Probe on Red Ties," a headline read. Soon gossip titans Hedda Hopper, Louella Parsons, and Dorothy Kilgallen were heaping abuse on him. Overnight Sinatra was transformed by the right-wing press from the crooning idol of bobby-soxers into a violent, left-wing Mafioso.

Sinatra said he punched Mortimer because the columnist called him a "dago." In fact Mortimer had been calling him some other things in print. He wrote about what he called "the crooner's penchant for veering to portside" and reminded readers that Sinatra had been named in HUAC testimony as "one of Hollywood's leading travelers on the road of Red Fascism." Mortimer, nephew of the editor of the Hearst-owned New York *Mirror*, pledged that "this column will continue to fight the promotion of class strug-

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Jon Wiener is the author of *Come Together: John Lennon in his Time* (Random House).

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gle or foreign isms posing as entertainment"—like *The House I Live In*.

HOW PINK had Sinatra been? HUAC's sources were pretty disreputable. The first to name him was Gerald L. K. Smith, a raucous native fascist. In 1946 he told the committee that Sinatra "has been doing some pretty clever stuff for the Reds." Sinatra was named again in HUAC testimony in 1947 by Walter S. Steele, a private Red-hunter who had once accused Campfire Girls of being "Communistic." Jack B. Tenney, a California state senator who headed a state version of HUAC, reported in 1947 that Sinatra had taken part in a dinner sponsored by American Youth for Democracy, which J. Edgar Hoover had declared a communist front.

Between *The House I Live In* in 1945 and the big 1947 HUAC hearings, Sinatra had in fact moved much closer to organized left-wing political activity. In 1943, when riots broke out in Harlem, he went uptown to speak at two integrated high school assemblies, urging the kids to "act as neighborhood emissaries of racial goodwill toward younger pupils and among friends." Shortly after, when white students in Gary, Indiana, boycotted classes at their newly integrated high school, Sinatra spoke in the school auditorium and sang "The House I Live In." What other star at the top of the charts has thrown himself into the civil rights struggle so directly?

In May 1946 Sinatra issued what *Billboard* called "an anti-Franco blast." The statement was remarkable for two reasons. First, the only people who still remembered the support that Spain's dictator received from Hitler and Mussolini were real leftists. And second, there was Sinatra's Catholic background. The comment caused the Catholic *Standard and Times* of Philadelphia to label him a "pawn of fellow-travellers."

Sinatra moved closer to the Communist Party in July 1946, when he served as vice president of the Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions. Known by its asthmatic acronym, HICCASP had been a broad coalition of pro-Roosevelt liberals and leftists, ranging from Thomas Mann to Rita Hayworth. Sinatra became an officer during a faction fight in which Communists pushed liberals out of the organization and steered it toward Henry Wallace's left-wing challenge to Truman in 1948. Sinatra wrote an open letter in THE NEW REPUBLIC to Wallace at the beginning of 1947, calling on him to "take up the fight we like to think of as ours—the fight for tolerance, which is the basis of any fight for peace." Within three months headlines appeared linking him to the Communists.

A month later he was fired from his radio show; six months after that his New York concerts flopped. Soon his personal life was falling apart as fast as his career. By December 1949 his affair with Ava Gardner had become an open scandal. Columbia Records was trying to get back the advance they had given him. In 1950 he was released from his MGM film contract, and his own agent, MCA, dropped him. He was a has-been at 34.

After Sinatra's stunning 1953 comeback in *From Here to Eternity*, he remained a Democrat. He sang "The House I Live In" at the Hollywood Palladium at a 1956 campaign salute to Adlai Stevenson. He returned to the political wars with new energy during the spring of 1960. He had two projects that season: working for the Kennedy campaign (Sinatra's version of "High Hopes" was the official Kennedy campaign song) and breaking the Hollywood blacklist that had barred left-wingers from working in the movies ever since the 1947 HUAC investigations.

The second project was announced shortly after Kennedy won the New Hampshire primary. The *New York Times* headline read, "Sinatra Defies Writer Blacklist / Hires Albert Maltz for his job filming of 'The Execution of Private Slovik.' " Maltz had written *The House I Live In*. *The Execution of Private Slovik*, a recently published novel, told the story of the World War II G.I. who became the only American since the Civil War to be executed for desertion. "This marks the first time that a top movie star has defied the rule laid down by the major movies studios" 13 years earlier, the *Times* explained. Sinatra would produce, Robert Parish was to direct. Slovik would be played by a TV tough guy named Steve McQueen.

SINATRA, asked if he was fearful of the reaction to hiring a blacklisted writer, had a defiant, I-told-you-so response. He quoted his own 1947 statement criticizing HUAC's witch-hunt: "Once they get the movies throttled, how long will it be before the committee gets to work on freedom of the air? . . . If you make a pitch on a nationwide radio network for a square deal for the underdog, will they call you a commie?"

A square deal for the underdog seemed to be exactly what Sinatra was after—for underdog Maltz, who served time in a federal penitentiary for refusing to name names, and also for Slovik. According to director Parish, Sinatra regarded Slovik not just as a victim of an unjust system of military justice, but as "the champ underdog of all time."

"They're calling you a fucking Communist!" Harry Cohn, king of Paramount Pictures, shouted at Sinatra. The attack had come, predictably, from Sinatra's old enemies in the Hearst press. Editorial writers for the New York *Mirror* reminded readers that the guy who just hired a Red had once had a " 'romance' with a dame to whom he was not then married." (Sinatra must have murmured, "Hey, that was no dame, that was Ava Gardner!")

John Wayne found Sinatra's Achilles' heel. Asked for his opinion on Sinatra's hiring of Maltz, Duke said, "I don't think my opinion is too important. Why don't you ask Sinatra's crony, who's going to run our country for the next few years, what *he* thinks of it?" Sinatra responded with "A Statement of Fact," for which he bought space in the *New York Times*. In it, he declared that connecting candidate Kennedy to his decision to hire Maltz was "hitting below

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the belt. I make movies. I do not ask the advice of Sen. Kennedy on whom I should hire. . . . I have, in my opinion, hired the best man for the job."

Just as the controversy seemed to be dying down, the Hearst papers ran the banner headline: "Sinatra Fires Maltz." The *Times* and the trades contained a new ad signed by Sinatra, headlined simply "Statement": "Mr. Maltz had . . . an affirmative, pro-American approach to the story. But the American public has indicated it feels the morality of hiring Albert Maltz is the more crucial matter, and I will accept this majority opinion."

IN AN INTERVIEW SHORTLY before his death in 1985, Maltz recalled the incident. "Sinatra threw down the gauntlet against the blacklist," he said. "He was prepared to fight. His eyes were open. The ad firing me was ridiculous. The American people had not spoken; only the Hearst press and the American Legion had. Something had come from behind that caused him to change his position."

Maltz brought out his scrapbooks. Among hundreds of faded clippings was one from Dorothy Kilgallen's gossip column. "The real credit belongs to former Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy," she wrote. "Unquestionably anti-communist, Dad Kennedy would have invited Frank to jump off the Jack Kennedy presidential bandwagon if he hadn't unloaded Mr. Maltz." Kennedy's campaign advisers worried also about Sinatra's Mafia aura and expressed the hope that the singer would keep his distance from the senator. But, the advisers said, they hoped Sinatra would help with a voter drive in Harlem, "where he is recognized as a hero of the cause of the Negro."

After the election, JFK asked Sinatra to organize and star in his inaugural gala. The singer proudly escorted Jackie, but Jack was the one he cared about. In a gesture of classic macho deference, Sinatra offered to share a prize girlfriend, Judith Campbell Exner, with the president. Kennedy liked the idea and began an affair with Exner. (Sinatra's hit that year, appropriately enough, was *All the Way.*) Then Sinatra went too far; he introduced Exner to Chicago Mob leader Sam Giancana.

J. Edgar Hoover's ever-present eyes and ears quickly discovered the liaisons. Bobby Kennedy, in the middle of a campaign to crush the Mafia, put a stop to his brother's involvement with Exner. The Kennedys had been planning to stay with Sinatra in Palm Springs. He'd remodeled his house in anticipation of the presidential visit. At the last minute, JFK announced they'd stay instead with Bing Crosby—who wasn't even a Democrat. To the public, it was an inexplicable snub.

Sinatra always was, as *Village Voice* jazz critic Gary Giddins puts it, "a virtuoso at storing wounds." He got even with Bobby in the 1968 California primary by supporting Humphrey. Then he discovered the Humphrey campaign had the same reservations that the Kennedy campaign had had, and he quietly left.

As youth culture flowered in 1966, Sinatra married Mia Farrow; he'd just finished an album he called *September of My Years*. He was 51, she was 21, five years younger than his daughter Nancy. A sixties rebel, Mia cut her hair short and wore pants, and opposed the Vietnam War. Sinatra's friends explained the attraction: "He digs her brain." Soon, however, she was denouncing him and his pals: "All they know how to do is tell dirty stories, break furniture, pinch waitresses' asses and bet on the horses," she said. She left him to join the Beatles in India, meditating with the Maharishi.

SINATRA ANNOUNCED his retirement in 1971. "The principal activity of his retirement years," *New York Times* music critic John Rockwell writes, "was his political shift from left to right." The key moment seems to have come when the House crime committee held a new investigation of Sinatra's Mob ties in 1972. The committee was headed by Democrats including California senator John Tunney, an old Kennedy friend for whom Sinatra had raised $160,000 with a special show. The main evidence against him was the testimony of a confessed hit man who said that a New England Mafia boss had boasted that Sinatra was "fronting" for him as part owner to two resort hotels. The committee called Sinatra. "That's all hearsay evidence, isn't it?" Sinatra asked. "Yes, it is," the committee counsel admitted.

Always a public man, Sinatra explained the shift in his political thinking in a *New York Times* Op-Ed piece he wrote just after he appeared before the committee. His old politics of standing up for the little guy had been altered. Now he embraced the right-wing populism that defined the principal oppressor of the little guy as big government. And he saw his subpoena as a prime example of government oppressing a little guy. Sinatra became a Reagan Republican. "It didn't gall him as much as he had thought it would," reported columnist Earl Wilson.

His turn to the right coincided with a deepened contempt for women and his most offensive public behavior ever. At a pre-inaugural party in 1973, he shouted at *Washington Post* columnist Maxine Cheshire, "Get away from me, you scum. Go home and take a bath. . . . You're nothing but a two-dollar cunt. You know what that means, don't you? You've been laying down for two dollars all your life." He then stuffed two dollar bills in her drink, saying, "Here's two dollars, baby, that's what you're used to." He made that kind of language part of his concert routine for several months, to the evident enjoyment of his new right-wing following.

President Nixon invited him to perform in the White House in 1973—something the Democrats had never done. He sang "The House I Live In." Twenty-eight years earlier, he had sung it for students at newly integrated high schools. Now he was singing for the man who began his career as a member of HUAC from 1946 to 1950, when the committee smeared Sinatra. The president beamed with satisfaction, and Pat Nixon kept time by nodding her head. At the end of the program, for the first time in his public career, Sinatra was in tears. □

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

A Carpenter, An Architect

I wish Horton Foote would leave the past alone. Not his personal past, about which he might write well, but his own past writings. *Tender Mercies* (1983), a new piece of his about contemporary Texas, was one of the best American screenplays in years. The film's success apparently encouraged Foote to rummage in his trunk of manuscripts. *1918*, released last year, was made from a Foote play written several years before *Tender Mercies*; it managed to be simultaneously flaccid and overactive. Now Foote has dug up *The Trip to Bountiful*, which was written for TV in 1953 and was then produced on Broadway the same year.

The Trip to Bountiful
(Island Pictures)

Antonio Gaudi
(Teshigahara Productions)

The trouble is not, of course, simply that this material is old but that it is stamped with Foote's chief occupation for decades before *Tender Mercies*: merchant of pathos, Southern style. He flourished in the 1950s during the so-called Golden Age of TV, which seemed even then the Age of Golden Syrup. The main impulse of that age was anti-Hollywood: the small screen was used to celebrate the Unbeautiful People, in contrast to the perfection-worship of Hollywood. So we got on TV the pathetic types from big cities (*Marty*, *Queen of the Stardust Ballroom*) and we also got, among other small-town confections, Foote's Texan wistfulness. These TV plays, which seemed the predominant types, were carpentered as traps for tears. The very title of *The Trip to Bountiful* suggests that it's a sight for moist eyes. The new 1950s realism, which in fact reduced realism to facile pathos, is almost cartooned in Foote's title.

The protagonist is a gentle, aging widow living, not very happily, with her son and daughter-in-law (and you know what *they're* like) in a crowded Houston apartment. The old woman wants to see her hometown, Bountiful, before she dies; she has tried to go several times but has been thwarted. Finally she steals away—with some small change (so help me) in a knotted handkerchief and an uncashable pension check—and boards a bus. When she gets there (if you're following the allegory implied in the title), the town no longer exists. The last inhabitant died a few weeks earlier. She waits on the front porch of her dilapidated former home for her son and daughter-in-law to come and fetch her.

Oscar Wilde said of *The Old Curiosity Shop* that the reader who did not laugh at the death of Little Nell must have a heart of stone. I confess I didn't actually laugh at *The Trip to Bountiful*, but I smiled a lot, so perhaps Wilde would give me a passing grade.

Another confession: I am late in reporting on this film because I dreaded seeing Geraldine Page in a leading role. The recent Academy nominations, however, seemed to make a visit obligatory. The best news is that my dread was only partly justified. I've been watching Page on stage and screen since the beginning of her career and have seen what was, at first, the faintly imaginative use of method techniques harden into egotistical, egregious mannerisms, tough or grand or lachrymose as the role allowed. She has long since stopped caring much about the woman she plays: she wants only to display an invisible sign reading "Insufficiently Celebrated Great Actress." Because she had more room for display in Foote's film, I held back. But, as it turned out, Page is more restrained than usual. Although the woman she plays is never genuinely realized, at least in this case the affectations are as much the author's fault as hers. And Page is content here to display her alleged splendors only for an Academy Award, not for immortality. Still, I admit that here, unlike her acting in previous films and plays, I didn't often wonder why the "real" people in the work couldn't see that this supposedly "real" woman was acting.

There are two bonuses in the film. John Heard, paunched out somewhat, plays Page's son with affecting quiet. In a long scene with her in front of their ruined former home, what Heard says and does is testimony of tacit, unpleasant self-realizations.

Rebecca De Mornay plays a sweet young wife whom Page meets on the bus. The idea of the role itself—a bus-trip vignette—is tiresome, but De Mornay plays it with utter authenticity, with belief in this loving bride whose husband has just been sent to a distant army base. Her performance proved for me that film-going destiny can sometimes shape our ends, eschew them how we will. With *The Trip to Bountiful*, I was rewarded at last for seeing *Risky Business*, in which De Mornay played a flaming-cool call girl, and for seeing *Runaway Train*, in which she played a worker on an Alaskan freight train, grubby and tough. Those two fine performances make her sweet-little-wife role all the

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Kaos. Paolo and Vittorio Taviani tackle five Sicilian pieces by Pirandello and do the first three well. If you leave then, you'll see a rich two-hour film. (Reviewed 3/17/86)

A Room with a View. E. M. Forster elegantly adapted by the Jhabvala-Ivory-Merchant trio. Except for the dull casting of the heroine, it's this team's fullest achievement. (3/24/86)

Shoah. Claude Lanzmann's nine-and-a-half-hour documentary (shown in two parts) about the Final Solution. Interviews with survivors, witnesses, participants. The title is Hebrew for "holocaust." The work is a monument. (10/28/85)

Turtle Diary. Glenda Jackson, Ben Kingsley, and Michael Gambon interplay skillfully in Harold Pinter's adaptation of Russell Hoban's novel. The "liberation" of three sea turtles from a London aquarium becomes a wry, intelligent comedy of values. (3/10/86)

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more impressive. De Mornay is now more interesting to me than Page ever was.

As for Foote, he doesn't seem to have comprehended the phenomenon in his career. A writer in his 60s, pretty firmly confined by tendrils of wisteria and honeysuckle, broke loose to write *Tender Mercies*. But then, instead of forging ahead from that breakout, he decided to go back and root around in material that he had progressed from. I've read that he's busy with one more rummaging in his past work. I hope there's still time for him to put the best Foote forward.

In the February 3 issue I wrote of my meeting in Tokyo with Hiroshi Teshigahara, the director who has spent most of his recent years running a school of flower arrangement and doing ceramics. When we spoke, he told me that, a year or so earlier, he had made a documentary, *Antonio Gaudi*, about the buildings of the Catalan architect (1852-1926). The film, which runs 72 minutes, had just had its American premiere at the Film Forum in New York.

Other documentaries about architecture that I've seen, mostly short, have seemed mostly to be about the filmmakers themselves going mad as they tried frantically to put their appreciation of a three-dimensional art into two dimensions. Teshigahara's film is not only the longest that I know in the field, it's also by far the most successful. He understands perfectly the relationship of the light of Gaudi's country to the man's style (styles). And Teshigahara also helps to reveal the splendors of external shapes by showing us interiors.

No amount of previous knowledge of Gaudi—mine is only from photographs—ever completely dims the surprise in his work, the impression that the buildings have just this moment sprung out of the ground in a fantastic yet logical way. The film reinforces this feeling so strongly that I began to wonder what it must be like to live in Barcelona and see those buildings every day—as I see daily the new skyscrapers of Manhattan, on Park Avenue and Avenue of the Americas, which make me think of gigantic stacks of neatly piled banknotes. To live in Chartres, near the cathedral that is the greatest structure I've ever actually seen, could be a great temptation to humility. To live in Barcelona, amid the work of Gaudi, could be a great temptation to lay off strong liquor.

A paradox of this film is that it was Teshigahara who made it. The other day I saw again his *Woman of the Dunes*, which is overpoweringly simple. So is the building that houses his school. So are his flower arrangements. It's fascinating that he should be enamored of Gaudi's ebullience.

MIRACLES AND MELANCHOLY

Astaire Dancing: The Musical Films
by John Mueller

(Knopf, 448 pp., $45)

Frank Sinatra: My Father
by Nancy Sinatra

(Doubleday, 340 pp., $50)

One mercy of living between 1930 and 1960, if you took notice, was the good fortune of having the show put on by Fred Astaire and Frank Sinatra. Not that their worth was erased in 1960, when they started to move toward saloon chairs, golf, and more humdrum ways of passing their time. You can still see *The Gay Divorcee*, "Puttin' on the Ritz" from *Blue Skies*, or *Silk Stockings*; and you can listen to *In the Wee Small Hours*, *Songs for Swingin' Lovers*, or *Only the Lonely*. Those pieces have not dated, as popular songs and movies are supposed to. What is sublime or wounded in them now always was so.

Astaire may have meant most in the mid-1930s and Sinatra in the mid-1950s, but their old glories are intact. Call them brilliant, graceful, touching, original. That's not enough. Fred's electric proud turns and Frank's wavering falls were ways of greeting a messed-up world. They are peaks in the American musical, a mode that covers more than just stage shows and movies. Song and dance are a response to life as comprehensive as speech, say, or being realistic. Musicals are not made now as they were once at RKO and MGM, but music and dance are everywhere on television: most commercials are musicals of some sort, and even the news has its tune. We have music now before health insurance, work, or realism.

BETWEEN 1930 and 1960, America produced art that is more conventionally called great: Faulkner, Wright, Parker, Rothko—place your bets. Fred and Frank seem so much more basic. Can we take their popularity seriously? Just because they were so accessible and entertaining, one may pass over the puzzles in their solitary natures and the tensions that existed between them and media created for transience and fun. But greatness comes with special needs and demands. It alters its media and our expectations. Fred and Frank showed their transcendence by not showing the strain. That does not mean their stuff is easy, or casual. We know that an Astaire step or a Sinatra phrase is out of common reach. But heroes in the shower do it Frank's way, and any hotshot on the dance floor is likely to be called Fred. More than popular, they made singing and dancing general, hopeful habits.

But neither of them wanted the difficulty of their greatness to loom over us. If magic can go wrong, it is only a trick. So Fred excelled in movies and Frank in the recording studios, cauldrons for the perfectionist, where both of them could throw out the mistakes and let the work come up as astounding but as natural as a sunrise.

Astaire and Sinatra are both regarded as old men now, though Fred, at 86, is 16 years older than Frank. They are retired from most things except lasting public affection, television commercials, and those dismal incidents that define the business of being a celebrity. And here are two books—one magnificent, one circumscribed—both meant to celebrate, yet both revealing a great deal about the souls of these artists' geniuses.

John Mueller is a professor of film studies at the University of Rochester as well as an authority on dance. He has

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interviewed Fred Astaire, yet he keeps a distance from him of the sort that Fred maintained with so many of his partners. There is little here of Fred's life—just a sentence or so on his two marriages, one to a woman who had never seen him on stage, the other to one (surely the only one) who had seen none of his films. We do not even learn the process by which Frederick Austerlitz, once of Omaha, Nebraska, became Fred Astaire—perhaps the most poetic name-change in show business. Nancy Sinatra is Frank's daughter. She makes the claim so many times you wonder if there is an inheritance dispute in the offing.

MUELLER'S book is as well set up as a tested lecture. There is a general introduction that raises key issues in looking at Astaire's pictures—the development of his career, the authorship of the pictures, his way of working, the elements of his style, his use of film. Thereafter, there is a chapter for every musical film. (We are spared *On the Beach* and those other "straight" performances.) These chapters do not assess the films as wholes. They take it as given that the plots or the drama are foolish pretexts for the numbers. There were 212 numbers, Mueller reports, with 133 "fully developed dance routines." And of those, he proposes, 75 are "at or near the masterpiece level." All the numbers are analyzed as extensively as a book can manage. For instance, on "Cheek to Cheek" from *Top Hat* (a five-minute sequence), Mueller writes about 1,200 words to accompany 28 frame enlargements. The book has over 2,300 photographs, not one of which catches Fred off-guard. Being clumsy was his sin against the Holy Ghost; there may have been so little life in these photos because he was so set on being perfect.

Part of Astaire's legacy is his cool, elegant charm, which manages to be simultaneously detached and obsessive. It's like a Cole Porter song or a Noël Coward joke in human form. The faunlike dandyism is lyrical, saintly, asexual, and stylistic, and it left its mark not just on dance, but on writing, design, and behavior. In never seeming gay, but in trading macho for manners and sweat for polish, Astaire has had a huge, enigmatic influence—and sadly, it is one that Mueller overlooks.

His book is dead set on the dancing, and it draws upon great ingenuities and felicities of book design to keep the text and pictures swinging along together. Every picture is black-and-white, as if the sensibility of the RKO movies was God-given and proper, a bone structure that stares through all the later color. Mueller and his publisher have done us an immense service. This accumulated study of Astaire's dances is a treasure of reference supported by shrewd research on the productions and warm informative writing on the routines. I would be surprised if the greatest Astaire expert didn't need and learn from this book. I'd guess that Astaire himself will spend hours with it, finding those tiny flaws no other eye sees. Indeed, the book is very close to the storyboards he might have made as he conceived and rehearsed his dances.

IT IS A shortcoming of the book that we don't learn enough about how Astaire created. Mueller describes the remarkable ratio of preparation to shooting. For example, for the solo dance in *Royal Wedding* in which Fred traverses the walls and ceiling of a room, he used some of the ten-week preproduction rehearsal time and all of 13 specific rehearsal days before shooting the four-minute, five-second number in a day and a half.

That is model moviemaking economy, long since abandoned in Hollywood. But it is also the search of a man who wants to sort out rough drafts and errors in private, an artist who is aroused by film's deep and rather dark affinity with perfection. Mueller accepts Astaire's word that he just tried out steps until something developed. Was there no advance notation or drawing, no plan, when the great dances are so structured? It would say a great deal about Astaire's art if we knew it had been all in his (or his choreographer, Hermes Pan's) head. It would appear more instinctive, perhaps, and add a fervent secrecy to the perfectionist, a zeal in which it was always a compromise for him to have a partner.

Moreover, while Mueller makes it very clear that Astaire took over the choreography and the filming of his numbers, he does not always pursue that power to its logical end. Very soon after Astaire joined RKO and agreed to the commercially viable partnership with Ginger Rogers, he established the dances as his province. He was absolutely firm that filmed dance depended on the uninterrupted coverage of the full figure in a context of space that allows us to feel the dynamics and the danger of human movement. And so the great numbers have very few cuts, and nothing as stupid as close-ups of twinkling feet. Late in his career Astaire could do nothing about that gaffe when Francis Ford Coppola directed him in *Finian's Rainbow* (and the same fault mars Coppola's *Cotton Club*).

YOU might say that Astaire was simulating the audience's view of a stage. But that's too simple. For the camera does move with his dancing, laterally as a rule, maintaining the couple's relationship with space, decor, time, and destiny, insisting on enclosure and the challenge, no matter how headlong and rapturous the motion. This is not mere coverage; it is a sustaining discipline that matches and incites the motion. The dancers never get away; they never fly. The camera is as hard as the floor, and just as susceptible to gorgeous imagery. But it does not yield to the fantasy of dancing on air. Despite all the inane plots of Astaire films, space is as real and moral as it is in Edward Hopper paintings. The lack of cutting is what gives us the now in which such perfect things are done—as in Bob Beamon's Mexico City long jump. But it is the relentless keeping up of the frame that makes perfection seem matter-of-fact, too, a shot of light in the dark, a poised moment in the disorder of eternity, so beautiful because it just happened as time passed by.

There are some lumps in the cream—fatuous cutaways, moments when decor obscures the dance, and downright ugliness. (And they survive along with the glories. If Astaire was in real control, why were these "bad" shots even filmed, let alone used?) No setup in a musical is arrived at casually. It is fairly clear that while Astaire called for and got repeated takes of the dances from his preferred point of view, there were also extra shots (or extra cameras?), providing cruder footage that was likely to be used in the editing.

Mueller does not say much about how the editing proceeded on Astaire's films, though many of the lapses from purity are occasions on which tidy-minded editors might have "saved" a misstep or introduced a "breather" in an otherwise perfect shot. Astaire, in other words, had more movie control than any other dancer of his age, and it was control that understood the nature of film as well as Renoir or Ophuls did. And yet it was not complete. We don't know why it retreated. We have to imagine some sudden shift from authority to shyness in Fred,

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just like those instants when his dances end and life resumes.

In the same way, the greatness of the numbers is beset by feeble plots and comic business to rival the love stories in Marx Brothers films. If we grant that Astaire took charge of his dances, then we have to allow that he was indifferent to the films as wholes. That's regrettable. For the movie musical had a potential that knocked against the industry's conservative faith that we needed "realistic" plot scenes every now and then. And so Fred agrees to talk to Ginger, chatting as best he can, when he has already seduced her under the sweet, metaphoric cloak of "Night and Day."

Mueller concedes that that number (from *The Gay Divorcee*) is a milestone in the integration of story and numbers. It does not just advance the plot; it lifts it to a level of passion not available to *Camille* or *Stella Dallas*. It is a rare height. Too often, the clumsy plots lurch on laboriously to their happy endings, unaware that narrative contentment is dross beside the bliss of the dances. Astaire knew and was liked by his composers—for he was also an enchanting singer—but he seems never to have sought the opportunity to conceive a whole show, to make musical the text, instead of wondrous episodes.

Astaire gave his all for grace at a time when the world was mad. He was as antisocial as any obsessive, but he took a chance on songs and dances in which two people meet and merge, then part again, returning to a natural, Keaton-like aloneness, the place where perfection imagines. Fred Astaire vanishes if you look all the way to the end of his being. There is a magician's nothingness there, a serenity that cannot stop its attempt at unhindered happiness for four, five, even six minutes, but it is never warmed by it. Desire counts on never reaching its object. And so he backs off, as if the song somehow had become "I Won't Dance" or "Never Going to Dance Again." There is no charity as great as Fred's forgiving the world for not being dance all the time.

IF Frank Sinatra is one step less extraordinary, is it because he was more conventionally unhappy? Astaire's enigma has to do with his capacity for rapture, so godlike in its way of disarming doubts. Sinatra abided by a more reasonable disquiet. He was sad that his woman had gone, that he was the last man in the bar at a quarter to three, that hopes

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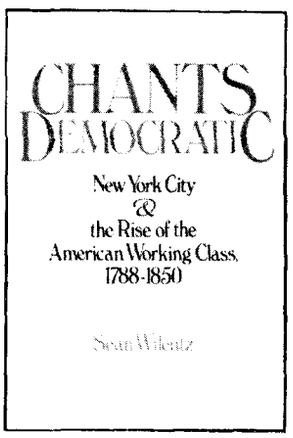

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With a Memoir by **Edward Shils**

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had turned sour. But Sinatra has kept an eye on bigger crises. In 1945 he promoted and played in an Oscar-winning short film, *The House I Live In*, recommending universal religious and racial tolerance. He gave voice, appearance, and honorary gang membership to JFK. More recently he has presided over Reagan's inaugural galas. In the "For the Record" section of Nancy Sinatra's album/tribute, as the 1960s wax, we see the dedication of the Frank Sinatra Youth Center for Christians, Moslems, and Jews in Nazareth. We see Sinatra being named a Commandeur de la Santé Publique by De Gaulle, Man of the Year and Entertainer of the Century by this body or that, getting an honorary doctorate in humane letters from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and Order of the Leopard from the Republic of Bophuthatswana ("the first white person to receive this honor").

FRANK has been very wary of books. He made threatening noises to deter Kitty Kelley from writing a biography of him. So he has picked his own author, in-house, for what Doubleday modestly calls "*the* celebrity book of the decade." (What happened to good old "the"?) He's talked to her, and it's likely that no one else would have won his trust. He's dug up old family snapshots, and his participation has prompted a legion of other celebrities to tell us what a champ Frank is. But celebrity is America's last ideology—flabby, promiscuous, camp—and we know the encomiums are as available as the awards. There are plenty of good stories and unmistakable signs of Frank's candor and generosity, and of his sense of life as all anecdotes and gestures. Sometimes the pals set up an odd disharmony. Never seen Frank throw so much as a punch, one says. But another warns that he is one tough little guy. Phil Silvers talks of Frank's startling kindness, but he is not allowed to tell the whole story of how Sinatra never forgave him for a small remark.

It's a more crushing book than anything Kitty Kelley might write, because it reveals so nakedly what the Sinatras believe in. At the back of the book there are pictures of the record sleeves, stills from the movies, and a ten-page section, 20 pix to a page, like a wall papered with lottery tickets, of Frank with other celebrities or with those people whose burning ambition it was to have their pictures taken with him. The text is put together with the same awkward, insecure, unblushing overkill. Nancy writes like someone afraid she's going to forget the full load of compliments to heap on her father's chip-heavy shoulders. Her only relief from this duty is talking about herself; there is an entire chapter on her marriage to Tommy Sands and her recording "These Boots Are Made for Walking."

And yet something fascinates, and a life is disclosed. Sinatra wanted the world, and he got enough of it for success to vanquish his own desire. Something happened. Sinatra went from being a skinny, rather homely New Jersey kid to a bandstand beauty with Harry James and Tommy Dorsey. You can see his looks alter in the pictures, the cocky street smarts and resentment peeled away to show wonder and unhindered yearning. Millions of women loved him. They wanted to rescue him from malnutrition and that aching want; they longed to nourish him. He had a safe wife, Nancy, another New Jersey Italian. They would have three children. He made several light movies, in the best of which he was Gene Kelly's buddy. He made it. And then he lost it, as if he needed to reinvent desire.

HE left Nancy and the three kids to go with the raging beauty of Ava Gardner. It wouldn't last as long as the divorce from Nancy or the guilt. Among all the homilies from stars in this book, there are a few comments that stick. One is from Raquel Welch: "I think Frank is suspicious of most women. He thinks they only go for him because of who he is. That's why he likes Nancy, his first wife. She knew him when he was nothing, and he trusts her absolutely."

As he broke with Ava Gardner, he lost his recording contract and was dropped by his agent. It's too much to say he was in the pits: probably the collected membership of the Order of the Leopard could have managed on what he had. But he felt he was down, and he found a mordant emotional charge in the feeling. He is sentimental about underdogs. He got the role of Maggio in *From Here to Eternity* and at Capitol he started to make his classic albums, some of the new long-playing records in which a dozen songs sustain a single mood or reverie.

What had made Sinatra novel as a band singer in the late 1930s and early 1940s was his disdain of jauntiness and hollow cheer. This kid wanted things he didn't have, and the need was sexy because of its frankness. He never kidded the songs. He believed in them with a self-dramatizing courage that showed he might be a good actor. Historically, this was no small thing. In the culture of rock we no longer marvel at heartfelt emotion in popular music. But in the early decades of this century singers were guarded. The lyrics of songs were reckoned to be as silly as the rhyme schemes. If not, you had to face the hunger for love and sex they masked. Bing Crosby was the model for tranquilizing his own material. This was a very white response to the lurking content of songs. Blacks were allowed the blues and their alarming sexual directness, but whites had a mocking self-control. (Astaire, too, is of interest in this history, for he had a high, light, clean voice that subdued the implications of the lyrics. He made you hear music, not the message.)

Sinatra's voice was always warmer, rougher, more experienced and literary. His approach was earnest, lovelorn, and sexy, and he meant what he said. He got away with it, because he defined a new sincerity and made it necessary. Another singer of the 1950s, Johnny Ray, was laughed into obscurity because he was so hurt he cried. Sinatra had too much taste to weep, and his songs were too good to need it. But he was the singer who told us to face what popular songs were about—and so he ushered in Elvis and rock, and he made the blues white.

WHEREAS Astaire was ideally alone—not just in solo dance routines, but dancing with women with the respect a botanist might feel for a prize leaf—Frank was lonely, gloomy, horny, and a little sorry for himself. The risk of sentimentality was usually offset by his love of singing. He had worked for years at diction and breath control; all through the 1950s he took pride in seeming a little drunk while being superbly controlled. Even so, if you replay the great albums you can hear the monotony of melancholy—"Here's That Rainy Day"—a wistful slowness that comes close to taking charge of the singer. It's there in the very expressive album covers—a lonely Frank, brooding, not far from the lyric outcast.

Those album sleeves are like stills from his best movies. His Maggio deserved an Oscar. Sinatra had ancient eyes in a head that seemed too large for his body. He looked at fellow actors like a reformed alcoholic watching booze dry. He was happy not to sing in pictures, and he took great chances in showing nastiness on the screen. He

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gave a virtuoso performance in *The Man with the Golden Arm*, and he was ratlike as a would-be assassin in a small film called *Suddenly*, hard to see now because its action foreshadowed the shooting of JFK. He was flat-out brilliant as the comedian Joe E. Lewis in *The Joker Is Wild*, and never less than worthy in *Some Came Running* and *The Manchurian Candidate*.

THEN something happened, worse than the earlier fall. He must have known he had become untouchable, and his need for art was a little less than his longing for reassurance. In 1959 the *New York Post* called him the Love Voice of the Century. How do you handle such nonsense? He slipped back into being a New Jersey businessman. His face began to fill out, and he was on his way to being plain, dumpy, and a little grouchy, not too temperamentally inclined to use the saving device of his wicked grin. He not only kept the company of Dean Martin, Sammy Davis Jr., and Peter Lawford, but he began to elevate their herd instincts into a supposed model for new gentlemen. It was all a touch *Playboy*ish, and eerily close to JFK's tastes. The group's natural home was Las Vegas, and their achievement was in growing old without suffering the tests of pain and maturity that had challenged Sinatra's best songs in the 1950s.

He kept his voice, but the albums were less coherent and more complacent. He made more films, but he did not hide his boredom, or the laziness that chose any script if gang members were around. He became a celebrity suspicious of the press, so hugely important that he began to see the trivial ways he was being wronged. The later songs are "My Way" and "New York, New York," coarse and intransigent. They turn vulnerability into armor, and come perilously close to the spirit of Billy Martin and Donald Trump.

None of which matters too much, or any more than having his picture taken with gangsters. Entertainers and outlaws have always kept company in America—like George Raft and Bugsy Siegel, each wanting to be the other. I have no idea whether Mob lobbying helped Frank get the part of Maggio, or whether his ownership of the Cal-Neva gambling lodge at Lake Tahoe was tainted. This book uses whitewash like its author uses eyeliner, and that's part of its grimness. Frank might appreciate his Pal Joey image and see that no one in America would be less than tickled now to hear

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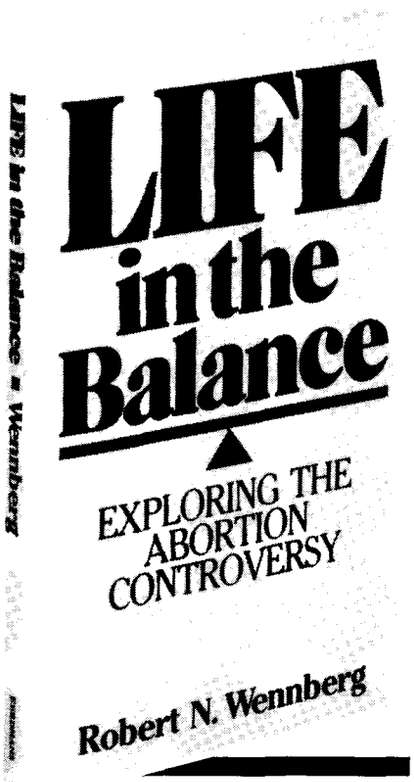

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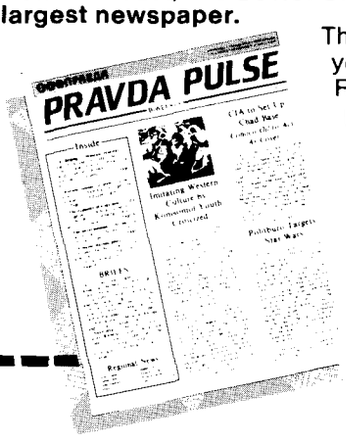

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that, yes, Sam Giancana did get him the Maggio role. Why shouldn't a gangster have a little taste? And why can't ol' blue eyes have more humor?

Astaire is probably just as famous as Sinatra. Yet Fred laughs off celebrity, with that same polite, rather nervy smile he had at the end of stunning dance routines. He won't have it; it's not what he came for. He was a dancer and he trained his face to be blank and abstract, like Keaton and the other desolate Pierrots. But Sinatra ate up celebrity, because he wanted respect. In the same way, he always sang about satisfaction and the slim chance of getting it. Fred never notices satisfaction. He is only interested in being in heaven, and like all angels he is a little lost away from it. He got older and less supple, but he has never changed: he was always a dancer who put up with life. Sinatra was someone who wanted to make it, for whom singing was the prime way. But the way and its self-righteousness have come to dominate his rather bitter view of the world.

Sinatra is the inescapable mood music for a part of our lives, even if we should be careful of the self-pity he sometimes ordains. But Astaire is something more—he is an advance on nature, enough like us to show us what the body can do, but with a grace that is also unearthly, like that of E.T. or the moon. There is the friction of hurt in Frank's voice, but Fred was always serene. We hear that Ginger's feet bled after some scenes had been shot and shot. But Fred's? It can't be. Does the moon bleed?

DAVID THOMSON

David Thomson's *American Beauty*, on the life, work, and legend of Warren Beatty, will be published by Doubleday in the fall.

GOD'S REALIST

The Essential Reinhold Niebuhr: Selected Essays and Addresses edited by Robert McAfee Brown

(Yale University Press, 264 pp., $19.95)

Writing in 1965 with the characteristic impatience of the emerging New Left, Christopher Lasch described the mind of Reinhold Niebuhr as "frozen in the polemical patterns of the late forties," by which he chiefly meant that Niebuhr was quick to see the Soviet Union as the earth's scourge, while remaining virtually blind to the exploitative relation in which the United States stood to the undeveloped world. Yet 20 years later there are signs that Niebuhr is reasserting his presence not so much for those among whom such views of international politics continue to find favor, as for the once-radical generation that came of age in the sixties—especially those who have preserved something of their reformist energy.

Richard Wightman Fox, whose sympathetic biography is now attracting a good deal of notice (see page 34), tells us that his impulse to study Niebuhr's life and work derived from his need to "clarify the rift between my own teachers," both of whom were deeply affected by Niebuhr's example—one a "right-liberal . . . apt to stress the anti-utopianism of [Niebuhr] the political realist," the other a "left-liberal sympathetic to the theology of 'liberation.' " The new attention to Niebuhr is thus an invitation to think not only about Niebuhr's place in his own historical moment, but about the conjunction between his time and ours.

The news in our universities these days—old news by now—is that the Arnoldian notion of culture as "the best which has been thought and said in the world" is virtually defunct. Its last great spokesman in America, Lionel Trilling, had sensed already in the sixties that "the disenchantment of our culture with culture itself" was building into an academic orthodoxy, and Trilling's prophecy has been borne out. This is certainly true, for instance, of literary criticism, which has become a business not of advocacy but of exposure. Critics, whose professional challenge was once to defend books against those who charged them with being intrinsically subversive, now tend to implicate literature (even the seemingly dissident works by writers enraged at social reality) in the process of ideological coercion that culture performs on us all.

The same is true for cultural studies in general: the recovery by recent historians of the slave experience from beneath the layers of myth that had long obscured it; the new labor history that is attempting to identify a tradition of working-class consciousness in industrial America; the feminist scholarship that is challenging received hierarchies of behavioral and aesthetic standards; the theories of cultural transmission that seek a more flexible understanding of the dynamic relation between the Marxian categories of "base" and "superstructure." These are all concerned to understand the ways in which ideology is formative, rather than merely reflective, of material reality.

The present moment, in short, is an exciting time in the traditional academic disciplines because the concept of tradition itself is coming under assault. It is also, however, a bewildering and even frightening time, because the ultimate implication of most current work in the humanities is often a full-blown relativism, a consensual endorsement of the doctrine that man has no nature—only history. It is therefore more than a little puzzling now to witness the rising prestige of a Christian apologist who titled his major work *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (1943), and who restored a good deal of force to the doctrine of original sin as something more than a theological mystification of conflict in human affairs.

One source of Niebuhr's resurgent appeal must be his assent, however qualified, to the proposition that man's blindness to the relativity of knowledge is the one constant in the flux of history:

> Man is tempted to deny the limited character of his knowledge, and the finiteness of his perspectives. He pretends to have achieved a degree of knowledge which is beyond the limit of finite life. This is the "ideological taint" in which all human knowledge is involved and which is always something more than mere human ignorance. It is always partly an effort to hide that ignorance by pretension.

Over the years since Niebuhr made that remark, especially in the last two decades, the "ideological taint" has become the central subject for critical inquiry, including most recently the history of natural science (where Niebuhr thought it less pernicious than in social

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"science"). Yet his prescient sensitivity to the place of ideology in all human performance is not a sufficient explanation for the renewed interest in him. The fact is (and it is likely to be the first fact that strikes readers who come to Niebuhr for the first time), there is in him something more alien than familiar to us—something that can be detected most readily in his homiletic style.

The Niebuhr who is more jarring than confirming is Niebuhr the preacher. Since he usually spoke from notes, and many of his published sermons have the added polish of what he called "sermonic essays," it is not easy to recover a vivid sense of his presence in the pulpit. Fortunately, Robert McAfee Brown includes some sermons in his anthology, notably the brilliant and moving "Humour and Faith," reprinted from Ursula Niebuhr's earlier collection, *Justice and Mercy*. Niebuhr was a preacher above all else; the son and spiritual heir of an immigrant minister who, as Fox puts it, led the life of a "de facto circuit rider" in the German Evangelical Synod of turn-of-the-century Illinois. And though Niebuhr tended to speak of man as an abstract collectivity, he did so always with a tone of pastoral address—both of which lately have become suspect rhetorical gestures.

HE MADE his most telling move against modern culture, of course, when he insisted on speaking the discredited language of sin: "Man . . . is a sinner not because he is one limited individual within a whole but rather because he is betrayed by his very ability to survey the whole to imagine himself the whole." In renovating the language of sin, Niebuhr was responding to a portion of experience that was, more and more, escaping the range of secular thought and expression. He reached an audience in the postwar years because the human capacity for radical evil was, for a moment, overwhelmingly evident to even the most confirmed of optimistic progressives, who could approach it only by way of such psychological categories as the unconscious, and whom Niebuhr called, with a deliberate biblical echo, "the children of light."

Niebuhr, by contrast, was able to address the fact of evil without evasion or rationalization. By doing so he made his contemporaries aware of a general cultural aphasia that they themselves were in the process of recognizing. Trilling, for example, populated his novel of 1947, *The Middle of the Journey*, with genial suburbanites who cannot bring themselves to pronounce the dread word, death. To read the literature of the postwar years is to encounter everywhere such a collective stammer, a failure of language that Arthur Miller (also writing in 1947) called an insult to the dead:

> I got an idea, [says a young war-survivor about his fallen comrades in *All My Sons*]—watching them go down. Everything was being destroyed, see, but it seemed to me that one new thing was made. A kind of . . . responsibility. Man for man. You understand me? —To show that, to bring that on to the earth again like some kind of a monument and everyone would feel it standing there, behind him, and it would make a difference to him. . . . And then I came home and it was incredible . . . there was no meaning in it here: the whole thing to them was a kind of a—bus accident.

Niebuhr touched a nerve in the postwar years because he insisted that to endorse "accident" as a concept adequate to recent events (a concept that has always been unknown to the providential imagination) was to exclude any possibility of meaning in human experience.

If Niebuhr is coming back now, it is because of that insistence. He is not, to be sure, a purveyor of good news in our age of apocalyptic expectation. He remains a figure who inspires discomfort because that is precisely what he wanted to be. He always preached against cheap comfort (which he judged to be the usual product of Evangelicalism from Billy Sunday to Billy Graham). As much as his published prose may now seem to anticipate our growing sense of the ubiquity of "the ideological taint," his real force lies deeper: in his implicit chastisement of our certitudes, including the certitude that there are no values worthy of being deemed absolute.

IT IS quite true that sin, for Niebuhr, was the presumption that the transcendent can be realized, that the absolute can be incarnate in the self, in a nation, in political arrangements, or indeed in any of the systems of signification that add up to culture. But sin to him was also the surrender of belief in the transcendent and in our obligation to attempt its approximation. In the great Gifford lectures of 1939 (published four years later as *The Nature and Destiny of Man*) Niebuhr gave fullest expression to this view of man as oscillating between spirit and nature. Disaster, he warned,

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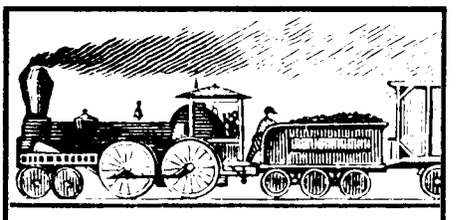

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can be equally the result of an idealism that denies man's involvement with nature or of a naturalism that reduces him to a biological organism. Those who heard him at the time had the spectacle of just such a disaster before them—a racialist ideology that exerted immense power by combining a belief in the biological basis of human character with a notion of national destiny as an embodiment of the transcendent.

With Nazism very much in mind, Niebuhr became a passionate advocate of a middle way between the naturalism that he saw underlying the Marxist view of history (to which he remained basically sympathetic because it accorded with his sense of the domination of self-interest) and the idealism that he considered the fatal naïveté of democratic liberalism (to which he was nevertheless drawn because it acknowledged at least a theoretical role for the transcendent values of justice and mercy in human affairs). It was this mediation between the contingent and the absolute that was the characteristic motion of Niebuhr's mind, and which, in *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness* (1944), became a full-scale defense of democracy.

AS THE WAR against fascism drew to a close and a war against communism seemed imminent, Niebuhr attempted to ground a democratic politics in something better than the anarchic principle of individualism, and to free it from the historical conditions from which it emerged—the rise of an entrepreneurial class in late Renaissance Europe and of the bourgeoisie that followed it. He wrote in the spirit of *The Federalist*, arguing for a recognition of faction and the universal will to power as the basic realities of political relations within and between nations. A republican model remained, for him, the best safeguard against the concentration of power into a tyranny that knows nothing of individual freedom, and against the diffusion of power into an anarchy that knows nothing of the individual's obligation to community.

Niebuhr was committed to democracy because he thought it the only political system capable of mediating between the two irreducible parties he called the children of light (those who believe naively that persons and nations are essentially benign) and the children of darkness (those who consider power and power alone to be the universal object of human desire). He tried to stake out a middle ground that he thought the Marxists had relinquished by pairing their impressive realism about the interests of the middle class with an obtuse romanticism about the interests of the working class. When such figures as Arthur Schlesinger Jr. transformed Niebuhr's concept of mediation into a specific political program (in Schlesinger's case he called it "the vital center"), Niebuhr had become not just a public man but a political influence.

THE positions that Niebuhr himself took on political issues always exhibited an acute sense of duality and paradox. In the early forties, for example, he came to the support of Zionist aspiration because he judged it to be the only means of satisfying the irrepressible emotion of Jewish nationalism, "the wisdom of the common experience as against the wisdom of the mind, which tends to take premature flights into the absolute or the universal [i.e., the ideals of toleration and assimilation] from the tragic conflicts and the stubborn particularities of human history," i.e., the intractable fact that anti-Semitism has been a constant feature of Western history. On the other hand, he insisted that the Allies would also inherit from their predictable victory the obligation of "maintaining and extending the standards of tolerance and cultural pluralism" that would guarantee the "right to be assimilated" of those Jews who wished to be.

Still more revealing of Niebuhr's sense that tragic ambiguity inheres in all political problems was his evident struggle to see the "Jewish question" from the perspective of the Arabic-speaking peoples living in Palestine. By the late fifties he was lamenting the defeat of "Martin Buber's . . . effort to establish [there] a bi-national state." While he considered "the thrilling emergence of the State of Israel" to be "a glorious moral and political achievement," he also remarked that

> a sympathetic Christian cannot but observe that the Jewish ethic and faith, so impressively universal in the diaspora, so fruitful in leavening Western civilization, is not morally safe when it becomes embodied in a nation like all others, and when in fighting for the survival of that nation, it comes in conflict with Arab forces.

With the same dialectical style, Niebuhr described the history of the United States as a record of continual oscillation between the Calvinistic emphasis on human depravity that was present in our Puritan origins and the perfectionist impulse that characterized our political beginnings in Enlightenment rationalism. He saw in the working out of these opposites what he called *The Irony of American History* (1952), the history of a nation's acquisition of unprecedented world power, with whose morally corrupting force it must more and more contend as it seeks to perpetuate the political principles—variously hostile to imperial power—upon which it was founded.

Our history, he knew, was especially productive of such self-confrontation—in the demand, for instance, that America preserve the memory of its citizens' manifold origins by maintaining some degree of cultural pluralism, while at the same time holding in check the chaotic force of competing nationalisms by pressing forward with the assimilationist ideal of the melting pot. These were, at bottom, the same sorts of duality that underlay Niebuhr's Christian faith, which was focused on the symbol of Christ as the junction of divine transcendence and human limitation. It was also the reason that he always thought in terms of a continuity rather than a disjunction between Judaism and Christianity, seeing in prophetic Judaism a balance between familial loyalty (which he judged to be one of the ways that man is able to transcend self-love) and a universalism expressed by the moral content of Jewish law.

SELF-LOVE, for Niebuhr, was the basis of sin. Even though this notion may be construed as a version of how ideologies arise, or at least of how they achieve cultural hegemony, it is nevertheless an anachronistic credo at the present relativistic moment. To many it is faintly embarrassing. This is so because the very concept of sin posits an absolute good from which the sinner deviates. Yet I would suggest that it is precisely to the extent that we can recognize our embarrassment (as an emotion that is a step toward self-knowledge) that we may become alert to Niebuhr's enduring significance. Niebuhr was a modern realist, but he was also, in the old way, a believer. The reason that in 1942 he thought the Allied victory in World War II was inevitable was not so much his estimate of comparative military strength as it was the nature of his faith:

> The divine power, the very structure of the world, the requirements for mutual living which are made part of the very character of human existence, all these are able to set

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an ultimate limit to man's defiance of the order of creation. The justice and the "wrath" of God can prevent any human rebellion from developing its defiance to the point of ultimate triumph. The devil, according to Christian myth, is able to defy God but not absolutely.

Such a faith threatens to sound quaint. But it also meets a psychic need that we have surely not outgrown, a need that may even be increasing after the heady days of iconoclasm through which we have lately lived. If the sixties, as Morris Dickstein and others have suggested, were a kind of religious awakening, then surely the seventies were their fiercely skeptical aftermath. It is possible that we are now ready for some sort of accommodation between the two. More specifically, it is possible that "left-liberals" will find in such a figure as Niebuhr the example of one who refused to cede all the efficacy of religious feeling to fundamentalist reactionaries.

In the service of that refusal, Niebuhr declared that "human vitality has two primary sources, animal impulse and confidence in the meaningfulness of human existence." That sentence, placed by Robert McAfee Brown at the opening of his anthology, provides a splendid entrance into Niebuhr's mind because it displays, in all its characteristic unity, his realistic assessment of the human impulse toward bestiality along with his refusal to relinquish faith in what an earlier age had called providence. "The experience of grace" (which Niebuhr stressed more than some of his readers seem to think) was for him ". . . the apprehension of the absolute from the perspective of the relative."

IN HIS double emphasis on sin and redemption he was the legitimate child of the Puritan founders whom he much admired—preachers who sought, with a comparable fervor, to inspire a vivid sense of sin along with the sense of divine generosity undiscouraged by man's intransigence. The great distinction that separates this tradition from contemporary fundamentalism is its insistence that sin is not the external enemy of the "saints" but an internal affliction of all human beings. For the Puritans, of whom Niebuhr was truly one, the surest sign of damnation was the presumption of salvation.

This paradox was something that Niebuhr never forgot, nor did he forget that bringing religion into civic affairs carries a risk of self-righteousness. Yet he was a public man as well as a religious man, because he acted on his conviction that man has a nature and needs to know it. It is this conviction, moreover, that continues to pose what is perhaps the most recalcitrant problem in Niebuhr's thought—the problem of distinguishing between an aliveness to the ubiquity of sin and a complacency about it, or even a cynicism.

The cynic, or in Niebuhr's terms, the child of darkness, perceives the world with an acuteness beyond the reach of the child of light, yet the fruit of that perception can be the license to confirm it. The child of darkness is always ready to exercise power, while the child of light tends to pacifism and disengagement from the world. (Brown appropriately includes in his collection an essay called "Why the Christian Church Is Not Pacifist," which serves to make clear that Niebuhr rejected passivity as unscriptural and morally indefensible in the face of conflict.) Niebuhr preached about sin, I suspect, more than about grace, because he was inclined to believe in something like a predestined division between human beings: he doubted that the children of darkness can be recalled to light, but he did not doubt that they must be resisted. And so he preached realism to the

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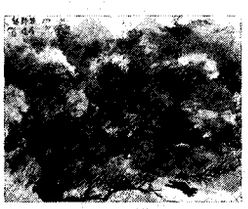

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converted more than idealism to the unconverted.

In this respect his ministerial emphasis was finally alien to the doctrine of nonviolence that gathered strength in the fifties and sixties. Martin Luther King Jr.'s strategy for social change, for instance, was based on an essentially conversionist premise. Niebuhr, by contrast, preached in a language that was largely free of the beckoning imagery of sanctification and beatitude. Such imagery has always played a relatively small part in Protestantism, though it was notably less active in Niebuhr's sermons than in King's, where its presence denotes a more hopeful assessment of man's capacity for moral renovation and where it may derive, in part, from non-Western sources.

Still, despite the determinist flavor of this Puritan tradition to which Niebuhr laid claim, he insisted that man does ultimately hold the power to choose which of the elements of his nature—his monstrous egotism or his capacity for self-transcendence—will be the germ of social contagion at any given historical moment. And now, with the publication of such sensitive books as Fox's biography and Brown's anthology, there is reason to believe that Niebuhr, and the lineage for which he spoke, may still have the power to enforce upon us a recognition of this responsibility. If this is so, it may even enlarge the possibility of our reaching back (and forth) over the present specter of nihilism toward the more difficult achievement of humility.

ANDREW DELBANCO

Andrew Delbanco is associate professor of English at Columbia University and co-editor of *The Puritans in America* (Harvard University Press).

A LIFE IN THE FRAY

Reinhold Niebuhr: A Biography by Richard Fox

(Pantheon Books, 340 pp., $19.95)

Reinhold Niebuhr is one of the saints of modern American liberalism. He was a man of God with a social conscience, and his preaching and writing made him an influential force on the left. In the 1930s he wrote in a nondoctrinaire Marxist vein, but later he became disillusioned with socialist principles. Niebuhr taught that although Christianity could not prevent misfortune, it could provide the faith that gives distance to suffering. He believed that politics would fail to provide ultimate fulfillment, but that salvation was not possible apart from a life of political involvement. As the years passed *Time* and *Life* came to feature him regularly, and Richard Rovere once called him "the official establishment theologian." Niebuhr was also one of the founders of Americans for Democratic Action, and a thinker whose words can now be ritualistically invoked to sanction the most well-intentioned proposals. Although neoconservatives have tried to lay claim to him as well, it would be hard to find anyone who stayed more devoted to the cause of the American liberal tradition.

A study of Niebuhr therefore invites high expectations. Although Richard Wightman Fox denies that this is an "official" biography, he had sufficient cooperation from Niebuhr's family and friends to make it hard to envision any other book supplanting this one for its thoroughness and critical care. Despite the book's imaginative limitations (its subject does not spring vividly to life), Fox has written a fine biography of Niebuhr the intellectual. A new generation will better understand Niebuhr's texts, and why he attained a revered status in the American liberal community.

Perhaps the lack of vividness is not entirely Fox's fault. Part of the problem may stem from the destruction by Niebuhr's brother of family correspondence. At any rate, Niebuhr seems to have been too controlled and rational a man for his life to have had much color. He was deeply devoted to his widowed mother, and evidently remained celibate until his marriage in 1931. Niebuhr himself wrote about his marrying in cryptic terms. A woman who was in love with him in 1925, but disappointed by his reaction, described him in a way that sounds chillingly like his image in Fox's biography:

> He's empty and cold and unemotional—unstirred in the depths of his being—at least only a little stirred. *Surely* with the tremendous capacity of mind—there must be this other thing dormant somewhere. But what will stir it, what will arouse it! I don't know. Or has so much gone into intellect that the other side has paid the penalty and become warped and dwarfed—and we must expect only mind! I don't know. He can *never* satisfy me as he is today—*never*. Perhaps I could mean in part what he needs—but he too must mean what I need.

WHATEVER this book fails to communicate about felt experience, though, it does demonstrate the origins of Niebuhr's thinking. He was born in 1892, the son of a Midwestern minister of the German Evangelical Synod of North America who had only come to the U.S. in 1881. Niebuhr was a favored child who did not need to rebel against his stern, Germanic father; they shared a liberal pietistic faith. Niebuhr was an excellent student who did not get much of a formal education until he started attending Yale Divinity School in 1913.

Fox traces some of Niebuhr's earliest inner struggles to his standing as a cultural outsider. At Yale he continued to be ill at ease in the English language, and he also had to contend with the painful subject of his German-American identity. Throughout World War I, he was a superpatriot, believing that by endorsing the American side he was simultaneously fulfilling the cause of the true German. It is an expression of this biography's genuine impartiality that Fox does not flinch at showing how Niebuhr's brand of patriotism contributed to a wave of cultural repressiveness. Endorsing Prohibition was an essential part of Niebuhr's early conception of Americanism and progressivism. It took the shock of the Treaty of Versailles to move him to question his prior liberal thinking.

During the 1920s Niebuhr's Evangelical Church in Detroit flourished. It was a solidly middle-class congregation, although an enduring myth about Niebuhr would have it that he was a preach-

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er for factory workers. He regularly challenged the moral complacency of a prosperous culture, as he assailed the sin of pride with more than a little self-satisfaction. He had become a leader of liberal Protestantism in America. At a time when secular liberals were inclined to give up on politics, Niebuhr and his friends were moving leftward. He criticized modern industry, became increasingly pro-labor, and for a time even called himself a pacifist. America was for Niebuhr altogether too consumption-oriented and success-minded, overly interested in health rather than salvation. He fought the Ku Klux Klan, and assaulted Henry Ford's pretensions to humanitarianism. By 1929 he joined the Socialist Party.

In 1928 Niebuhr had started his notable career as a teacher at Union Theological Seminary. With the publication of his *Moral Man and Immoral Society*, he explored the ethics of social change, as he distanced himself from liberals who preached ideals while complacently ignoring the necessities of power. Niebuhr thought that Christians should face their moral responsibility for injustice in the world. He argued as a realist who knew that history did not have in store a community of love. As Fox so ably puts it, for Niebuhr "religion was not doing good, feeling holy, or experiencing the transcendent; it was grasping the evil in one's efforts to do good, recognizing one's finitude, realizing that the transcendent was unattainable." Although Niebuhr found sentimentality repugnant, it was increasingly evident that he was part of the tradition of humane tolerance associated with the heritage of John Stuart Mill.

Like Freud in his *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Niebuhr saw the self as the ultimate basis for social tensions. For Niebuhr as for Freud, the soul was at odds with itself, unaware of its own aspirations and therefore doomed to disappointment in the search for happiness. While Freud thought in terms like narcissism and aggression, Niebuhr invoked the inevitable role of sin and evil in even mankind's highest endeavors. Niebuhr was deeply suspicious of any calls for individual self-fulfillment. Fox believes that Niebuhr's central contribution to the intellectual life of the 1940s was "the somber assertion of built-in limits to human existence."

DRAWING BY JACK COUGHLIN FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

After the Hitler-Stalin pact, Niebuhr became convinced of the statesmanship of Franklin D. Roosevelt. Niebuhr struggled on behalf of American intervention in Europe. As in the First World War, he was a superpatriot, and came to fight both communism and communist sympathizers. (At first he approved of the execution of the Rosenbergs.) Fox suggests that Niebuhr's theology resembled that of Whittaker Chambers, and that Niebuhr's friend Lionel Trilling's *The Middle of the Journey* echoed Niebuhr's point of view. Yet somehow J. Edgar Hoover continued to view Niebuhr with suspicion, and the FBI compiled a huge file on his activities.

Niebuhr grew increasingly interested in international relations. Fox concedes that too much of Niebuhr's work in this field was amateurish, that it indulged too uncritically in Cold War rhetoric. More surprising than the borrowed tone of these writings was Niebuhr's eagerness to popularize to the point of serious intellectual coarsening. Writing for the *Saturday Evening Post* does not seem in keeping with his status as theologian and thinker. (Alas, even the best of American thinkers seem to yearn for the "success" of mediocre journalism.) One suspects that had Niebuhr lived a more cloistered existence, and been less ambitious in worldly terms, his writing would have had a better chance of sustaining his earlier promise. Fox is right to judge Niebuhr by the highest standards of intellectual achievement. Niebuhr's last books were embarrassingly thin.

Ill health dogged Niebuhr for his last 19 years. A stroke in 1952 permanently changed his life. Subsequently he sought help in psychotherapy for depressions that were characteristic of his immediate family but also may have been organically linked to his physical afflictions. Although Niebuhr said he lacked the imagination for autobiography, he continued to publish on contemporary political issues. He despised Richard Nixon and opposed the Vietnam War. The honors that he continued to receive made his weakened powers all the harder to bear. He died in 1971.

PAUL ROAZEN

Paul Roazen is the author most recently of *Helene Deutsch: A Psychoanalyst's Life* (Doubleday).

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THE AGONIES OF EROS

The Good Apprentice
by Iris Murdoch

(Viking, 522 pp., $18.95)

Iris Murdoch has repeatedly denied that she is a philosophical novelist, but few critics are willing to believe her. How can her denial be taken seriously when the evidence conspires against it? She was a tutor in philosophy at Oxford for many years, and she has published studies of Sartre and Plato, a moral inquiry (*The Sovereignty of Good*), and many essays in learned journals on metaphysics, ethics, and aesthetics. At the same time she has been an astoundingly prolific novelist—22 books in 30 years—and her fiction is studded with allusions to God and the devil, good and evil, the nature of the moral life, definitions of freedom and reality.

Moreover, philosophers living and dead are enrolled in the action. Heidegger's influence on a satanic priest in *The Time of the Angels* (1966) is crucial to the story, and the first word in *Nuns and Soldiers* (1980) is "Wittgenstein." *The Philosopher's Pupil* (1983) is dominated by a world-famous thinker who returns to his provincial hometown in England to write his Summa and, not incidentally, to mess up the lives of everyone who swims into his tyrannical ken. Her first novel, *Under the Net* (1954), was strongly indebted to Sartre, especially the phenomenological ideas in *La Nausée*, before he emerged as the compleat existentialist. In her new novel, *The Good Apprentice*, the characters spend a lot of time and energy bouncing their notions about death, atonement, and salvation back and forth in a sort of philosophical Wimbledon.

Despite this overwhelming evidence of the philosopher's mind and hand, one does not feel in reading Murdoch's elaborately plotted novels that they are grounded in a specific philosophical system or statement of values. Philosophy is certainly present in her fiction, but it has the form of appearance, not reality. She means to entertain rather than instruct or persuade, and we do not become engaged in a strenuous give-and-take of ideas. She is an abundantly inventive storyteller whose complicated narratives deal with ruinous love affairs, treachery, betrayal, murder, adultery, accidental death. Yet her novels are also mischievous comedies that remind us of Feydeau's bedroom farces when unsuspecting husbands (or wives) arrive on the scene just as the errant lovers are tearing off the last piece of underwear.

More interested in Eros than Apollo, Murdoch is a tireless explorer of sexual love in its most convoluted and obsessive forms. When passion abruptly seizes the unlikeliest hearts at the oddest moments, as it so often does in her novels, she can slip with surprising ease into the tropes of soap opera. The fact that a philosophical term like "categorical imperative" sits cheek by jowl alongside mawkish paeans to love does not make the situations less sudsy. "I was drunk with love!" Bradley Pearson exclaims in *The Black Prince* (1969), when he is fatefully struck by the lightning of desire. "It was enough that she existed and that she could never be mine. I had to live and love alone." Thus does a costive elderly writer (three books in 30 years) become infatuated with the 20-year-old daughter of a friend. Swooning with love, he embraces the chair his darling has just quit, and abandons himself to sentimental rapture, any finicky scruples about words and reason gone with the wind of passion. In a typical Murdochian twist, he ends his love song with a perfectly straight face: "the condensed phenomenology of the business had been enacted within me." The language of philosophy is enlisted in the cause of farce.

Love, doomed and preposterous and inexplicable, is at the core of most Murdoch novels, and she does not hesitate to ring the same variations on this theme in book after book. Inevitably, as the torrents of words pour over us, it becomes hard to tell one novel from another. They blur into a single indistinct black mass. What sticks in the mind is not the individual characters, but a set of stock-in-trade types. There is the magician-enchanter, usually a middle-aged Jewish intellectual, who casts a spell over those around him; the nubile girl, not quite as young as Lolita but just as sly and dangerous; the saintly man of honor whose death destroys ties of loyalty and affection among his friends and family; the failed mystic (often a defrocked priest); the provoked and jealous wives past their prime who throw themselves at men young enough to be their sons; the charming wastrels; the gossiping birds of prey; the manipulative cynics.

Unfortunately, the characters who seek to emerge from the stereotypes in these comedies of Eros never acquire the human singularity, the tangible personality, that enables us to accept them as unique and complex individuals. What arouses Murdoch's exuberant ingenuity is plot, not people. Like a sorcerer she summons up convulsive happenings and antic masquerades with fluent ease, but her men and women remain pawns in a game of sexual chess, rather than recognizable incarnations of human experience. The cool dispassion with which she views her characters, combined with her zest for melodramatic absurdity, often results in fictional creatures whose behavior is not simply irrational or grotesque but in the end literally incredible. The most flagrant example of her disdain for the believable occurs in *The Sea, the Sea* (1978), in which a sophisticated London theater director madly pursues an old and dreary housewife as his light of love because 40 years earlier, when they were young and innocent, she had jilted him. Murdoch's self-enclosed and airless world is riddled with such implausibility, which her versatile plots do not redeem.

IN HER new novel, Murdoch takes us by surprise by shifting her main focus from love to guilt. What sets *The Good Apprentice* apart from the rest of her work is the unremitting authenticity of the hero's suffering, which has been caused not by sexual love but by the tragic consequence of his reckless irresponsibility. Edward Baltram, a 20-year-old university student in London, tricks his straight-arrow friend, Mark Wilsden, into eating a sandwich loaded with LSD. When Mark falls asleep after a rapturous psychedelic trip, Edward skips off to visit a girl nearby. Half an hour later he returns to find an empty bed and an open window through which Mark, in a blind stupor, had plunged to his death.

The irreversible horror that has come of his silly joke drives Edward into a black hell of remorse that embarrasses, puzzles, or merely annoys those around him. His stepfather, Harry Cuno, a glib apostle of the upbeat, delivers a pull-

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yourself-together pep talk that stings Edward like a whip: "Happiness, that's what life's about, it's your job to be happy, not to spread gloom and despair all around." His stepbrother, Stuart, who has thrown over a brilliant academic career because he wants to do good but can't decide how to go about it, counsels quiet and prayer (though he doesn't believe in God) and serious reading, all worse than useless. Thomas McCaskerville, Edward's uncle by marriage, a Scottish half-Jewish psychiatrist who has grown increasingly skeptical about his profession, salts the wounds of the tormented young man with an enigmatic sermon about "death as the centre of life." In this case The Wise Jew, usually one of Murdoch's staples, is no help at all.

IMPALED on his grief and guilt, Edward decides to seek out the father he scarcely knows, in the hope that Jesse Baltram, a visionary painter and sculptor and a notorious philanderer, will have the key to his son's redemption. At Seegard, the eccentric and drafty fortress that Jesse built on a marsh near the sea, Edward is told by his stepmother and half sisters that his father is not there, and they fold him into their Whole Earth Catalog regimen of the pure and simple life—vegetables, clean thoughts, and dirty feet. When Edward finally encounters his father, the old scoundrel is dying, too ill and too crazy to guide his son out of hell. Nothing at Seegard, which at first filled Edward with the promise of peace and serenity, is what it seems. The house is bedeviled by poltergeists, and beneath her saintly mask Jesse's wife is seething with resentment and malice. "The enchanter's palace," Edward realizes in sadness, "was already beginning to fall to pieces."

The point that Murdoch would seem to be urging on us in the final section of the novel, "Life After Death," is that the only means of salvation for Edward must come from within himself. In the end, though he will be forever clawed by guilt, he is no longer dying of it. But Murdoch may be saying something altogether different, for she has encased the transcendent meaning of her hero's anguished quest for redemption in portentous apocalyptic riddles. When Thomas McCaskerville takes over the "philosophic" reins of the book, he indulges in many bewildering statements about death, but it is not clear whether he is talking about the metaphoric death of the ego or the physical mortality of the body. Nor are we given any clues about the significance Iris Murdoch attaches to Thomas's ambiguous, death-intoxicated annunciations. Are we meant to understand him as the spokesman for her own godless faith, or is she mocking the hubris of a psychiatrist who thinks *he* is a god?

In a much earlier novel, *A Severed Head* (1961), Murdoch was ruthlessly sardonic about psychoanalysts, whose pretensions to scientific accuracy in their moral judgments she viewed as a lust for power over others. Whether she now has a more generous view of psychoanalysts is impossible to say, unless we can know whether Thomas's ruminations about the moral transfigurations of death are what she believes or a cunning parody of modish nonsense. Faced with such impenetrable layers of mystification, who can be sure whether she thinks "the experience of death sets us free.... The time for death is now" is a demented violation of common sense or a numinous truth? With all its circular talk about death, this long novel has none of the lucid wisdom that E. M. Forster contained in one remarkable sentence: "Death destroys a man, but the idea of death saves him."

The Good Apprentice is a peculiarly disjointed and uneven novel. Edward's story is powerfully moving, and the descriptions of the wild countryside around Seegard are terrifying and beautiful. Alas, Murdoch cannot forgo the fun-and-games of her star turn, the comedy of sexual manners. There is no need to say more; Auden's plea still beats unanswered on the air: "O tell me the truth about love!"

THOSE who object that the modern novel cannot be taken literally, that Iris Murdoch is a writer of fantasy, overlook the fact that she regards herself as a realist in the grand tradition of the 19th-century English and Russian masters. She is as meticulously detailed as Trollope in her descriptions of clothing, faces, gardens, houses. And the atmosphere she whips up can be strongly reminiscent of Dostoyevsky, in the sense that Murdoch's characters, like his, are perpetually in a state of frantic motion, restlessly hopping onto buses and trains, dashing from one place to another, spinning in a whirlpool of demonic emotion. They don't eat, they don't sleep, they can't stop talking, they are indeed *possessed*, overwrought, hysterical, their

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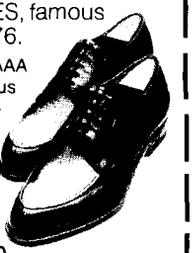

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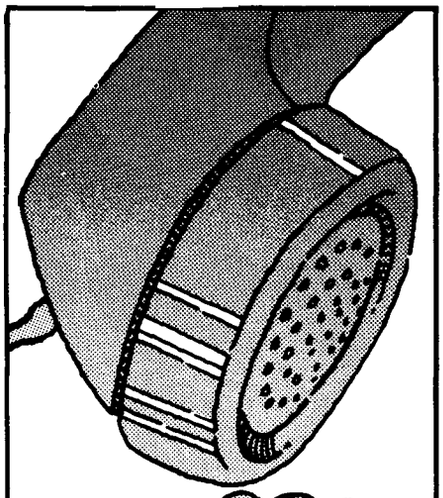

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lives in chaos. Yet all resemblance vanishes the minute we realize how narrow and frivolous her men and women seem, with their endless nattering about love, compared to Dostoyevsky's range of passion, which embraces not only sex but a huge Russian universe of politics, ideology, religious fanaticism, ideas. Finally, Murdoch's creatures, and the erotic turmoil she subjects them to, exist in a vacuum. We rarely get any sense of a great wide world beyond this merry-go-round of desperate measures. These men and women are dislocated, unattached to anything but themselves and each other.

Is it possible for a novelist of ideas to be so astonishingly unconcerned with politics and society, with the gritty, importunate actuality of a life and culture that leave no one untouched, no matter how deaf and blind to anything but love? Her fictional world is utterly devoid of a sense of history. Except for one inferior novel, *The Red and the Green*, set in Ireland at the time of the Troubles, her stories take place in a timeless, undefined English present. She is incurious about the way war and pestilence make themselves felt in the most ordinary lives. Even when something important in the world elsewhere touches the story, it gets lost in the maelstrom of desire. In *An Accidental Man* (1971), an American graduate student stays on in England to escape the draft. (Why his studies didn't do the trick is never explained.) Vietnam is not named, as though it doesn't really matter, and it might as well be the Wars of the Roses for all the difference it makes to Murdoch's characters, including the young American, busily in love with a golden-haired nitwit.

Great philosophical novels, like *War and Peace* and *The Magic Mountain*, resound with the clamor of history, with the presentness of the past as moral drama and myth, as truth and consequence, as the rootedness of a particular place in time. In the solipsistic universe of Iris Murdoch's fiction, the only history is personal history; psychology, not philosophy. Since the drastic eruption of love is the only event that can penetrate their hermetic self-absorption, is it any wonder that it's hard to believe in Iris Murdoch's creatures, much less have a strongly felt response to them and their destinies?

PEARL K. BELL

Pearl K. Bell is a writer who lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

THE MYSTERY OF A MASTER

The Enigma of Piero
by Carlo Ginzburg

(Verso, 164 pp., $18.95)

This book offers a historical analysis of two panel paintings and a fresco cycle by Piero della Francesca, and claims thereby to establish a new equation between historical and art-historical research. Its author, Carlo Ginzburg, is best known for two works on social history, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth Century Miller*, a fascinating and well researched account of the heretical views entertained in a North Italian peasant community, and *Night Battles*, a less convincing reconstruction of the magical practices and beliefs of the North-East Italian *benandanti*. According to Peter Burke's introduction to the present book, Ginzburg also has a long-standing interest in art history.

He is, it appears, a detective in the mold of Sherlock Holmes, with an uncanny instinct for hidden clues, for *prove indiziarie*, which enables him to solve riddles that have long confounded art historians. The analogy to detection, be it noted, refers not to professional investigation but to literary detection—a genre in which the crime is imaginary, the clues are scattered by the author, and a solution is achieved, by the author once more, if not by outright cheating then through intellectual sleight of hand. Any art historian who is an addict of the detective story will recognize the falseness of this parallel. Art history is a jigsaw puzzle that is complete only when the individual pieces, all of them and not

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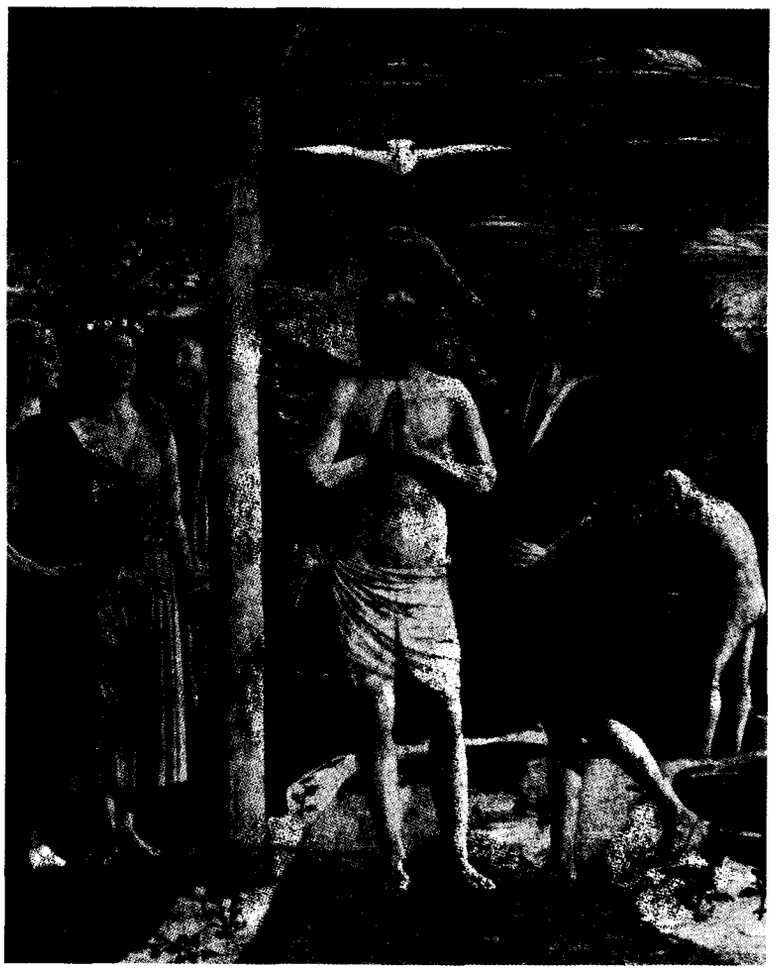
just some, can be shown to fit.

What is the enigma of Piero? For the past 75 years, Piero della Francesca has been one of the most admired Italian painters. In the National Gallery in London the popularity of his two altarpieces far exceeds that of other Early Renaissance paintings. In Italy during the summer months caravanserais of tourists set off in buses to Arezzo and Monterchi and Borgo San Sepolcro to visit his major works. Comparatively few paintings by him survive. One might suppose that for this reason his work would have been satisfactorily explained. But in practice there is not a single volume that offers an acceptable account of his artistic personality.

The modern literature opens in 1927 with a brilliant, poetical volume by Roberto Longhi (which has for Ginzburg, as for so many Italian art historians, the character of a sacred text), and it includes an admirably written but inadequately probing monograph by Kenneth Clark, confused volumes by Gilbert and Battisti, and a number of clever (but in large part mistaken) booklets on individual works. Nowhere, then, do we sense solid ground beneath our feet. It is not, or it is not wholly, the art historian's fault. Piero della Francesca's is a peculiar and impenetrable personality. "Look at me, but not too inquisitively," his paintings seem to say, and that is what art historians by and large have done.

The problem is inherent in Piero's style. He moves us through his sheer impassivity. The means by which he does so are not human or descriptive, but spatial and geometrical and luministic. At Borgo San Sepolcro, seated in wooden chairs facing the fresco of the Resurrection with our backs to the Madonna of Mercy, or facing the Madonna of Mercy with our backs to the Resurrection; at Urbino, standing before the Flagellation; at Arezzo, slipping hundred-lira coins into the light box in the choir of San Francesco, we can define with some precision what the paintings mean to us. Our difficulty lies, rather, in establishing what, at the time that they were painted, they were meant to mean.

When you are confronted by a great painting that is not self-explanatory, it is tempting to suppose that the ideas which it embodies must be great ideas. But with Piero there is no certainty that this is really so. Is the *Resurrection* a fundamental reinterpretation of the significance of the event, or is it a normal Resurrection raised through the painter's genius and the teaching of Alberti to a new aesthetic power? Does *Solomon Receiving the Queen of Sheba* have a depth of meaning that transcends its significance as narrative? Paintings were generally addressed to people, and one of the troubles with Piero is that we know very little about the people for whom his paintings were produced.



PIERO DELLA FRANCESCA, *BAPTISM OF CHRIST* (DETAIL)

It is here that Carlo Ginzburg intervenes. His starting point is the *Baptism of Christ* in London. Three angels are shown standing on the left of Christ. It has been argued on more than one occasion that they depict Concord, and that the painting was therefore inspired by the Council of Florence, which marked the end of the schism between the Eastern and the Western churches. If this were so, the panel would have been painted about 1440. Ginzburg agrees, adding that the picture was commissioned for the altar of the Baptist in the Camaldolite Abbey of Borgo San Sepolcro (though he prints a summary of a document that falls far short of proving that this was so), that the Abbot General of the Camaldolites was Ambrogio Traversari, who visited San Sepolcro in 1432 and was later closely associated with the work of the council, and that Traversari died at Camaldoli in 1439. How natural, then, that a picture "dense with allusions to the religious concord achieved at the Council" should have been painted not long after for San Sepolcro.

But the argument implied in this series of non sequiturs is circular. If you accept the date, you may believe the evidence. If you accept the evidence, you may believe the date. We know, however, that the *Baptism* was part of a polyptych, and we know that the polyptych was based on an earlier polyptych in a Camaldolite church not far from Arezzo, which was certainly known to both Piero and his patrons. These constitute arguments for a later dating; but Ginzburg, in his anxiety to hang the painting on a decent historical peg, brushes them aside.

The Arezzo fresco cycle of the Legend of the Cross was commissioned by Francesco Bacci, an elderly merchant. From time immemorial it has been recognized that one of the frescoes, the *Defeat of Chosroes*, contains a group of portraits that are likely to be those of members of the Bacci family. The focus of Ginzburg's interest is one of Frances-

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co's sons, Giovanni, who became a clerk to the Camera Apostolica and was in touch with humanist circles in Florence. It was he, claims Ginzburg, who played "a decisive role (perhaps even putting forward theological ideas)" during the planning of Piero's fresco cycle. Now he may very possibly have done so, but there is no proof that he did. Inevitably he was a friend of Traversari (who is a sort of Clapham Junction in Ginzburg's mythology, where all tracks converge). Later he was in contact with Cardinal Bessarion, who in 1459 received as a bequest a relic of the True Cross. Bessarion also owned (or is thought to have owned) two medals by Pisanello of John VIII Palaeologus, and one of these (of which no example survives) "must have been given or lent to Giovanni Bacci by Bessarion to be used as a model for the portrait of Palaeologus in the Arezzo cycle." Hence the logically unwarranted hypothesis "that Bessarion intervened to modify the overall iconographic scheme" of the Arezzo frescoes.

Almost half of Ginzburg's book is devoted to two essays on the Urbino *Flagellation*. The first consists of a review of the current literature on the painting. "One might be pardoned," writes Ginzburg, "for a somewhat sceptical reaction to this spectacle of thirty years of extremely close discussion about the *Flagellation* which have failed to result in even the most minimal agreement about the painting's date, or its patron, or the subject that it represents." The last phrase refers to the three male figures in the right half of the painting, not to the scene represented on the left.

The second essay, "Further Thoughts on the *Flagellation*," offers Ginzburg's solution. His point of departure is portraiture. On the right of the *Flagellation* stands a middle-aged man in left profile with a receding hairline, large fleshy ears, and an incipient double chin. A somewhat similar portrait occurs among the donors in the Madonna della Misericordia at Borgo San Sepolcro, and still another is found in right profile in the Arezzo frescoes. The three portraits, claims Ginzburg, represent one and the same man; and since one of them is at Arezzo, it is the ubiquitous Giovanni Bacci who must be portrayed. "The identification of the man in the brocade cloak as Giovanni Bacci scotches once and for all any interpretation of Piero's *Flagellation* as a variant of the usual treatments of Christ's flagellation." The painting therefore represents two levels of reality. The staircase in the background of the left is the Scala Santa, and the gilded figure on the column in front of it derives from the remnants of a giant statue that used to stand in front of the Lateran. The painting cannot, therefore, predate Piero's visit to Rome, and may actually have been painted there. Who, then, is the bearded figure represented in the right half of the painting? None other than our old friend Bessarion.

But if the painting is post-Roman, if it dates, in other words, from 1459, when Bessarion was 56, the portrait must show him as he looked at a much earlier time. He became a cardinal in 1440, and what could be more probable than that Giovanni Bacci "received a mission from the Pope to travel to Constantinople as nuncio extraordinary to give Bessarion the solemn news of his appointment as Cardinal"? But there is not a shadow of evidence that any such journey took place.

The judge in the flagellation scene, moreover, is once more a portrait of John VIII Palaeologus, and the message intimated by Bessarion's parted lips is that "the reigning Emperor is to be compared to Pilate in his comportment." Why, then, should Giovanni Bacci have commissioned from Piero a re-evocation of his (wholly conjectural) mission to Constantinople? Because at the end of 1458 he and Bessarion and the painter met in Arezzo to run over the progress of the Arezzo frescoes, and Bessarion "in discussions whose content we can only imagine" came up with a plan to present a painting of the Flagellation to Federico da Montefeltro, duke of Urbino (who was unenthusiastic about proposals for a crusade against the Turks), as a "figurative sermon addressed to anyone who appeared to underestimate the gravity of the Turkish threat." It follows that the barefoot youth to the right of the supposed Bessarion and the left of the presumed Giovanni Bacci must be Buonconte, an illegitimate son of Federico da Montefeltro, who died of the plague in the autumn of 1458. There is no record of Buonconte's appearance, but the angelic aspect and the pallor of the youth in the painting make the identification, in Ginzburg's view, reasonably sure.

All this is a tissue of tendentious nonsense that far surpasses anything previously written about Piero's paintings. It may be unfair to summarize what is already a summary, but nowhere in the book does Ginzburg appear as what he is claimed in the preface to be, "a plain historian [who] has a good deal to say about art patronage." He writes rather as a Roberto Longhi of intellectual history, guided by intuition, prone to cut corners, trimming evidence, less concerned with truthfulness than with effect.

WITH Piero the essential truth must, in the end, be elicited from the works themselves. There is, for example, a common view that the Arezzo frescoes were painted from a scaffolding running the whole width of the choir. If this were so, the three registers of frescoes on each side would have been painted in three successive stages: first the two lunettes, then the middle frescoes, and finally the battle scenes. Ginzburg adopts this conventional view. It would, he says, have been cheaper and safer to construct a scaffolding across the choir rather than one against each wall. I do not know how much scaffolding cost in the 15th century (though Ginzburg seemingly must know), but it would be surprising if a scaffolding that made the choir unusable for its true function were allowed to block the view of the worshipers and friars for between five and ten years.

Moreover, the frescoes on the left wall of the choir are generally agreed to be inferior to the better-known frescoes on the right. It is assumed on this account that in the frescoes on the left Piero made use of considerable studio assistance, while those on the right are autograph. The natural (and I believe correct)

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deduction is that the walls were painted successively, not simultaneously, and that the left-hand scenes represent an earlier style than the more accomplished frescoes on the right. The space projection of the frescoes lends color to this view. One of Piero's only dated works is the fresco at Rimini, *Sigismondo Malatesta kneeling before St. Sigismund*, the construction of which conforms to that of the later not the earlier Arezzo frescoes. One is bound therefore to infer that work started at Arezzo earlier than is supposed, soon after 1447 when Bicci di Lorenzo, the painter originally commissioned to decorate the choir, left Arezzo, and not after 1452, when Bicci di Lorenzo died. If this were so, accounts of the early development of Piero would have to be revised.

One revision is of special consequence—that the main panels of the polyptych at Perugia (which are regarded by Longhi and Clark and all writers on Piero as late products of the artist's studio) would become his earliest surviving autograph works. This in turn affects the *Flagellation* at Urbino. From the middle of the 18th century it has been assumed that the scene in the distance on the left represents the Flagellation of Christ. But much of the detail (the brilliant neon lighting included) would be unintelligible if this were so. The true subject is the Dream of St. Jerome. This is confirmed by a predella panel by Matteo di Giovanni, a Sienese painter from Borgo San Sepolcro, in which the Dream of St. Jerome is indubitably shown. The subject discussed by the figures on the right cannot, therefore, be the fall of Constantinople, or the sufferings of the Church, or the desirability of a Crusade. It must be, rather, the humanist problem of the reconciliation of classical and patristic culture, which was so widely treated by writers at the time. That this topic was one in which Piero's patrons had a lively interest can be demonstrated from a small panel in Venice in which the saint, seated against a rocky bookshelf with an open book across his knees, addresses the kneeling donor (an unknown figure whose name was Girolamo di Agostino Amadi) with the ferocity of a priest in a confessional.

If the paintings were restudied by a scholar who was skeptical of received opinion on every point, it might well transpire that Piero's development was less abnormal than is thought today, that he evolved like other artists, though with a stronger grasp of theory and a larger data bank of mathematics, and that the enigma (to return once more to Ginzburg's term) finally results not from his style, but from the blindness of the students by whom it has been analyzed.

JOHN POPE-HENNESSY

John Pope-Hennessy is consultative chairman of the Department of European Painting at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the author most recently of *Cellini* (Abbeville Press). His three-volume history of Italian sculpture has just been reissued by Vintage Books.

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 6*

as information." The word "propaganda" isn't in Cabezas's Spanish, nor is there any reference to disguising something. I think putting these words in Cabezas's mouth is extremely dangerous now, with the Reagan administration's attempt to portray the Sandinistas as masters of media manipulation and deserving to be overthrown by the *contras*.

KATHLEEN WEAVER
Berkeley, California

RUN AROUND THE RADAR

To the editors:
I was very much amused with TRB's "Lawbreaker's Friend" (March 10). As a member of a trucker family, our standing joke is how quickly radar detectors are improved as police get ever more sophisticated radar guns. It is our belief these same companies make both the detectors and the guns.

JACK LO MONACO
Agawam, Massachusetts

UNDIPLOMATIC TIES

To the editors:
As stated in the Notebook, February 17, it was South Africa's ambassador to the United States, not ours, who lifted a passage from Abraham Lincoln's second annual message to Congress to embellish a recent self-serving piece he wrote about his racist government. So why drag Reagan into it by suggesting that "next thing you know, Reagan will liken Botha to the Great Emancipator." Even a loyal Democrat like myself can spot an egregious non sequitur when it creeps into your generally fair columns.

AARON GOLDMAN
Washington, D.C.

TRB, *from page 4*

second in the case of Japan, where it wouldn't hurt to have another century or two for healthy antimilitarist sentiments to take root.

It's true that the main leverage we have in raising the matter of relative defense costs with our allies is the threat, at least implicit, to withdraw our enormous subsidy. And it's also true that we'd be crazy to do this without being sure that the allies would take up the burden themselves. Failing to take it up would be suicide for them, but the suicide of Europe and Japan would be catastrophic for us as well. That doesn't mean, though, that our leverage is worthless or unusable. Their implicit suicide threat is inherently less convincing.

In any event, in this negotiation we're a long, long way from anyone's ultimate bluff being called. A bit more astringency in the air, a bit more frank discussion of the relative costs and benefits of present arrangements, could concentrate our allies' minds and produce some marginal reforms. And marginal reforms could make a big difference to our budget. If Europe and Japan were to devote just one percent more of their respective GNPs to defense, in a way that spared us a like amount, this alone could slice $50 billion off our deficit. Yet we would still be bearing the superpower's share and more.

Here is an issue tailor-made for the Democrats. But so far, no leading Democrat has taken it up seriously. Several prominent pols have urged a "defense tax" on Japanese imports, but this is mostly demagoguery. The advocates are more eager to hamper free trade than to reduce the defense imbalance. Democratic senator Sam Nunn got some attention a couple of years ago with an amendment that would withdraw some of our troops from Europe unless the Europeans increased their own defense efforts. (It narrowly lost, following an intense campaign against it by the Reagan administration.) But Nunn's scheme was frankly designed to increase European defense spending, not to decrease ours.

In the coming budget battle, the defense welfare state we run for the benefit of Japan and Europe is too fat a target, and too politically juicy, to be overlooked. To be blunt, the vast majority of Americans who don't get invited to conferences on the future of the alliance think we're getting screwed.

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Rebuttal

THE NEW REPUBLIC, unlike the government of Nicaragua, is a democracy. Dissenters, instead of being censored, exiled, or shot, write rebuttals. Last week's TRB took issue with the TNR editorial supporting military aid to the Nicaraguan *contras*. In keeping with our tradition of democratic decentralism, I take issue with *comandante* TRB on two points.

KINSLEY'S LEGENDARY reasonableness and lawyer's mind find absurd the suggestion that some Latin American governments publicly oppose, yet privately urge, U.S. intervention in Nicaragua. That is a "logical contortion" too outrageous to be believed. To begin with, if what is merely absurd were therefore impossible, Kinsley, who has made the exposure of absurdity his specialty, would be out of business. But is it absurd? If he is right, why do we have huge and endless debates about the virtues of "private" (or "quiet") vs. public diplomacy? It should make no difference if we denounce the Soviet Union or South Africa privately or publicly. But in fact, of course it does, because international relations is not a cocktail party. Open statements carry more meaning, incur graver consequences, and elicit different responses from the government in question than private ones. Private statement shows a respect for power that a public statement does not. A public challenge is a form of defiance that weak powers cannot afford. Why, for example, is aid to Afghan guerrillas "covert"? Absurd, is it not? Anyone, Russians included, can read about it in the *Washington Post*. In fact, our aid is "secret" because Pakistan demands it. And Pakistan demands it not to hide the facts from Russians, but for diplomatic cover. Pakistan is too vulnerable to declare openly that it funnels American aid to fight Russians. Pakistan knows the price of adding insult to insurgency. Is Moscow hoodwinked? No. Just satisfied. And even if Kinsley were right that public objection coupled with private support is illogical, his conclusion that therefore it does not happen is yet another example of irrational reasonableness. It *has* happened. The Latin American information comes to us from at least three sources. One is a Republican member of the administration. Another is a prominent Democrat. The third is a Nicaraguan social democrat, a former Sandinista, with close contacts with the Socialist International and with many Latin American governments.

KINSLEY ASKS coyly: Are the Sandinistas Leninists? As if the question has not been considered or as if the answer is not clear. Whose testimony will he accept? The Sandinista leaders' own declarations? The word of Nicaraguan democrats, like Alfonso Robelo and Arturo Cruz, who have worked with the Sandinistas and know their methods? Or the word of Shirley Christian, who writes in *Nicaragua: Revolution in the Family* that in the regime's very early years, pre-*contras*, "the Sandinistas were gradually putting in place a Leninist Structure—the vast network of defense committees, youth and children's groups, militia, internal security police and army created as an extension of the Sandinista Front"? Will that do, or shall we wait for an official World Court ruling on the question?

SIDNEY BLUMENTHAL SEEMS to have made it his profession to be full-time chronicler of the errors of neoconservatism. His latest neocon watch in the *Washington Post* examines the post-Marcos world, and concludes (1) Jeane Kirkpatrick's authoritarian-totalitarian distinction has been proved wrong; (2) the one neocon wise enough to have jumped off a sinking distinction, according to his one citation, is me; (3) I jumped when water was coming over the transom. "By the end, even a few neoconservatives seemed to question a theory that seemed to have so little relevance to what happened in the Philippines." Unfortunately, Blumenthal is wrong on all three counts.

IN TWO MAJOR respects the authoritarian-totalitarian distinction of Jeane Kirkpatrick retains its force. As an analysis of the different natures of the regimes of, say, Marcos and Ortega, it remains as true as ever. And as a hypothesis about the different means required to get rid of the one as opposed to the other, it remains true again. Arturo Cruz will not be permitted to galvanize the opposition in even a fraudulent election. History has yet to produce an example of a totalitarian regime falling to "people power."

IN ONE RESPECT the Kirkpatrick theory may need revision. If it is interpreted as a prescription never to undermine authoritarian friends, then it has, most likely, met its counterexample in Manila. I say "most likely" because the history of the post-Marcos Philippines has not yet been written. It is possible, though I don't believe probable, that subsequent history will undermine even this counterexample. Moreover, that is a far cry from saying that the whole analysis is incorrect. In fact, the glee of liberals at the fall of the distinction is curious, since they seem to be the only ones religiously wedded to it: their agitation for driving out Marcos—and Baby Doc and Pinochet and Chun and Botha—is noisy and incessant. When it comes to driving out an Ortega in Managua, a strange silence settles in, and the air then fills with talk of diplomacy and accommodation.

THE IDEA THAT somehow neoconservatives have abandoned ideology because of Aquino's victory is also false. The Philippine policy that Blumenthal now hails as anti-neoconservative was carried out by . . . whom? Paul Wolfowitz, Richard Armitage, George Shultz, and Ronald Reagan. Hardly liberals. State Department pressure on Marcos began in earnest after the Aquino murder in 1983. It was that pressure, culminating in the Laxalt visit of October 1985, that led Marcos to call the election that became his ruin. Blumenthal quotes me as one who "concluded this week" that we should also be pushing authoritarians toward democracy. My advocacy of a "third force" strategy, with explicit reference to the Philippines, began long before Aquino's rise to power, long before Blumenthal turned his eyes to the Pacific. And—something Mike Kinsley will appreciate—it was not private. My piece on the subject appeared in these pages a year ago.

C.K.

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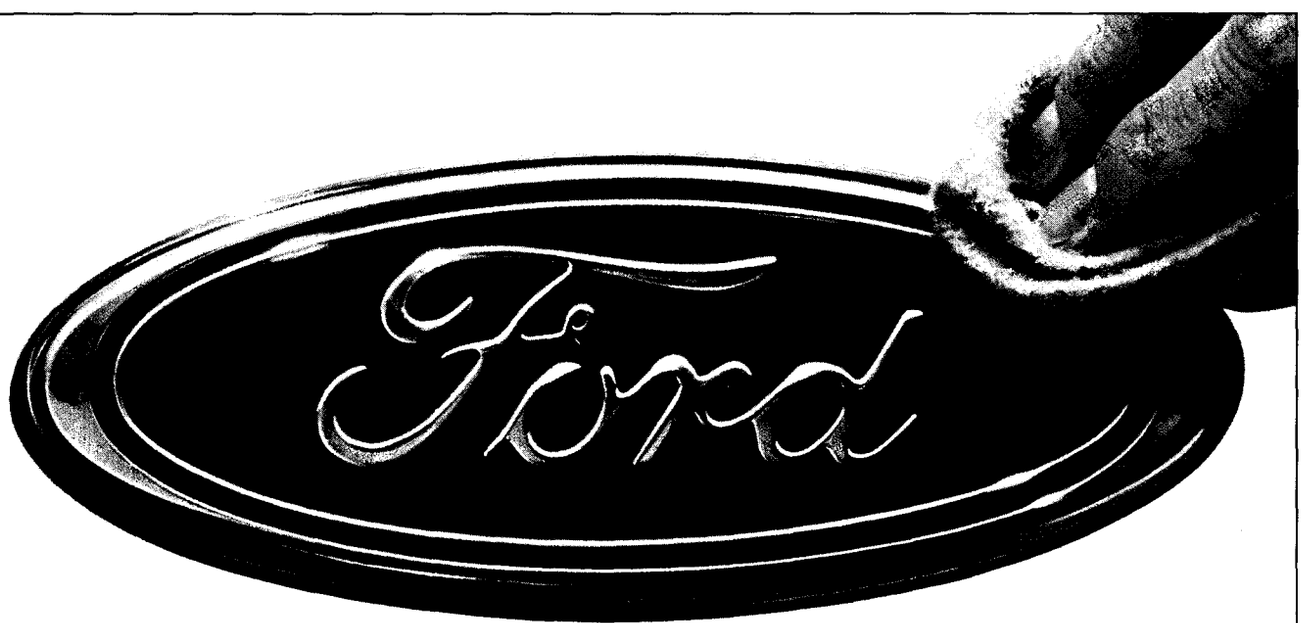

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